This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

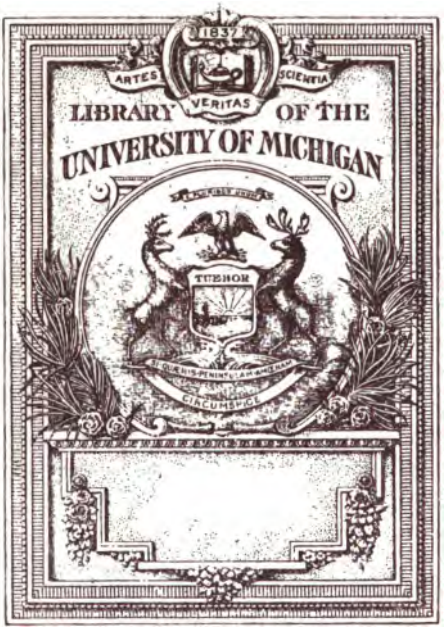
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

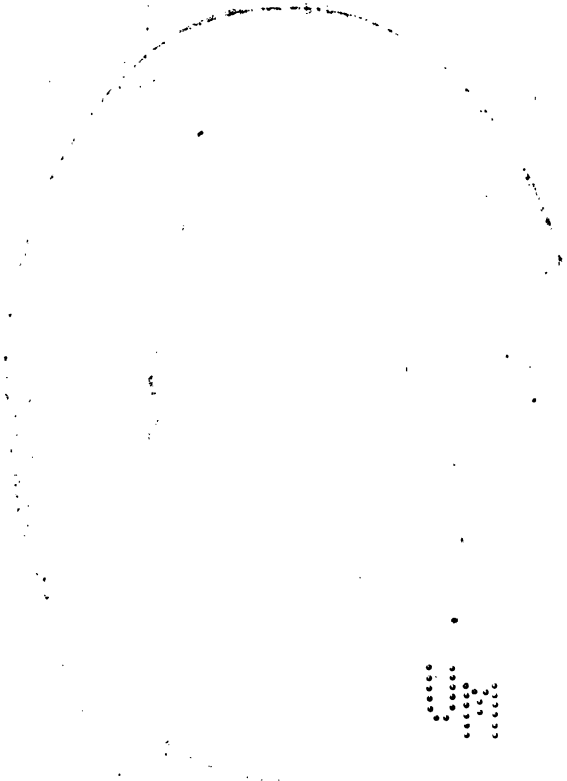
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`


1837
ARTES
VERITAS
SCIENTIA
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
TUEBOR

828
L973my

MY BOY IN KHAKI

MY BOY IN KHAKI



MY BOY IN KHAKI

Copyright, 1918, by Harper & Brothers
Printed in the United States of America
Published May, 1918

B-S

04-9-21 SM.

To
All the Mothers
of
All the Boys in Khaki
—and in Navy Blue

372114

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	The Empty House	1
II.	Putting Away	19
III.	Courage—or Camouflage?	'32
IV.	In Khaki Clad	42
V.	Whistling Through a Graveyard	55
VI.	Somewhere—	72
VII.	Not "How Long?" But "How Well?"	92
VIII.	God Is Not Dead!	110
IX.	The Greatest Fear of All	128
X.	A War-time Christmas	145
XI.	And a War-time Wedding	158
XII.	"They that Go Down to the Sea"	164
XIII.	Loose Him and Let Him Go	182
XIV.	"It Was High Time"	187
XV.	Ours Must Be the Spirit	193

MY BOY IN KHAKI

MY BOY IN KHAKI

I

THE EMPTY HOUSE

I CAN hear nothing but the shriek of the train that bore him away and the grind of the wheels as the crowd bent back to let them turn. Every one had been pushing up to the windows for a last hand-shake, a last God-speed—every one except the mothers and fathers. They stood apart, a little huddled group, the fathers with shoulders unnaturally set, the mothers smiling through stiff lips. But—their eyes! It is difficult for eyes to lie, least of all the eyes of a mother whose son is off to war.

Thirty boys there were. Thirty of our best and cleanest (there would have been forty if the ten other volunteers had passed the test) who stood at the first call of their

country. Forty boys to volunteer out of a little village of twenty-five hundred is a record to be proud of. And their town was proud. It feasted and honored them; flaunted a flag from nearly every building; brought out the band to precede them on every occasion; shut down business and pleasure to see them off, and, from the oldest inhabitant to the smallest boy, turned out to march behind them to the station. Sore as our hearts were, and blurred though the proudly marching line was to our eyes, we thrilled, and waved our flags, and cheered—when we did not choke.

As we stood for a moment, dulled with the pain of it and loth to leave even after the train had ground its way down the track and out of sight round the curve to the raucous shrilling of the whistle, I heard one man say, thickly: "God bless 'em! They've got the spirit, now—how many of them will ever come back?"

The man whom he addressed gave a tolerant grunt. "They'll never see service," he said. "They'll just go to some camp or other and have a few weeks' drilling, and then they'll get sent home. This war ain't goin' to last."

The other shook his head. "I hope you're

right. I hope you're right." He repeated as if to fortify his own doubts.

Then a veteran passed, leaning a trembling hand upon his stick.

"I'd like to see them young fellers come up against an ambush." His voice was shrill and touched with a certain good-natured contempt. "Why, they ain't one of 'em that's ever more 'n shot a rabbit. Now, where *we* . . ." His feeble voice trailed off in the crowd, but his last words stayed with me as I slipped from the tender sympathy of friends to find, with leaden feet, the longest way around to my empty home.

. . . . . .

"They 'ain't never shot anything more 'n a rabbit," the old man had said. Little he realized the grim truth of the allusion or how heavy lay the literal fact of it upon my heart. Little he knew what it was meaning to me to have *a gun* in the hands of a son of mine!

For it was through an accident with a fire-arm that the Great Gray Wolf of Tragedy —we called it that—had entered our lives, when he was a little child barely three years old, and, before his baby eyes, snatched away his older brother. The horror of that whole association had lain black and heavy upon our memories through the years. Not until

with the tones. "It was a little sudden, that's all. I'm quite willing. As you say, you're grown up now" (maternal reservations here), "and you must rely on your own judgment. When you were little—"

"When I was little we lived in the city, and the city's no place for kids to have guns—of any kind. *Mine* never shall, I can tell you. But here—why, Mom, these woods and hills are full of rabbits. You saw Mac after that one—the fellows catch dozens of 'em. And I can get a gun from a fellow for five dollars. A dandy. Do you *really* mind, Muddy?"

No, I didn't mind—not that he should hear—and that night he came up-stairs three steps at once to show me the "dandy." I examined it, lock, stock, and barrel, even ran my finger along the glass-like sight. He couldn't know how my soul turned sick at the touch of it! I had never been able to bear the sight of a gun in all these fourteen years.

"Ain't she a beaut, Mom? And I'm going hunting Saturday—Jack Daley and I."

On Saturday, at crack of dawn, they were off with a kit of lunch, a game-bag, and all the paraphernalia of the hunter of the Frozen North. It was snappy weather for November and the mornings were bitingly cold.

"I'm going to ask you something. . . . Something I never asked before, because . . . because I didn't want to hurt you. But . . . it's a long time ago now, Mother, and I'm a man now" (he would be eighteen early in the coming winter!) "and I'd like to do . . . to do something that other *men* do."

The glow and warmth were fading. This was a new one. He would not need so long a prologue to ask for an increased allowance or an orange-and-blue sweater. I began to sense the more serious problems of manhood.

"What is it, son? I've never been difficult to approach, have I?"

"That's it, Mom, you've always been such a peach, and you've done everything I've ever asked."

"Everything possible, sonny. It wasn't —always—"

"Oh, I mean, everything reasonable. And that's why I hate, now, to . . . but—oh, hang it! Mud, the fellows around here all go hunting, and—"

In spite of myself the arm flinched and he drew closer.

"Not if it's going to hurt you, Mommy—I wouldn't want it if it's going to hurt you."

By that time I had the leash on.

"Not at all, son." I was fairly satisfied

1837
ARTES
VERITAS
SCIENTIA
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
TUEBOR
CIRCUMSPICE

828
L973my

dier-stuff in our boys. Nothing but boys they are—nineteen—twenty—some a little older; boys whose spare hours have been devoted to skating, ball-playing, tennis, the innocent, harmless sport of growing youth. And now—this same fervent energy, this same high, splendid spirit must be bent to one grim end. The boys who have "never killed anything more 'n a rabbit," and who have, perhaps, squeamed a bit over even that pale experience, must learn the fearful art of killing men.

This seems so monstrous, so impossible, that I turn back to the memory of that more comforting, if tolerant, voice which had said, "they'll just go off to camp somewhere and have a few weeks' drillin' and then get sent home."

. . . . . .

My house is so big—and so, so empty! He is all I have—absolutely all I have on earth—and he is gone. I wonder, as I sit here alone in my room with his pictured face smiling back at me from its place on my desk, if I did wrong to let him go, so young, so unskilled in judgment, so fervent and impetuous of spirit. I wonder if he had had a father—a cool-headed, far-seeing father—if he would have let him go, or held him back?

And yet, the other twenty-nine boys had fathers, most of them. One man had said, "I would be ashamed of a son who did not offer himself at the first call of his country." Another, "I would go myself if they would take me, but, since they will not, the best I can do is to send my son."

That is the way we mothers feel. Gladly would we go ourselves, but *they*, our boys, whom we bore, whom we suffered for, whom we nursed, and whom we did *not* raise to be—

Time to halt there. Whatever we raised him for, it was not to be a coward, or a slacker, or anything that is selfish and poor in spirit. If to be a soldier is what is needed of him, then I trust we have raised him to be a good soldier. He will not destroy except to save.

The mind is terribly confused now with the thrill of newly stirred patriotism, the passionate appeal of those who have come back from the hellish "Front" to rend us with their fearful tales; the many speechmakings where our boys have been honored, the emotion of parting. Mostly we seem reeling about in a world that holds no familiar landmarks.

We had been thrilled before at seeing

our boys in the forefront of the local activities; most of them had been "stars" in some dramatic performance; most of them had stood alone upon a flower-decked stage and received, amid the plaudits of the people, a rolled parchment or a prize. We had had occasions for being tenderly proud of them. But when they marched, double column, into the court-room, preceded by the triumphantly shrilling band and all the officers of the village, to take their prideful places before the largest and perhaps most solemn congregation of people ever gathered together in our town, there was a pull at the heart and a singing in the ears that was like nothing ever felt before. They looked so young, so serious; they stood so pathetically erect; their eyes sought out their own folks so eagerly! There was something the matter with my vision that night—it has troubled me in the same way much of late. Instead of seeing him a tall and slender youth of nearly six feet, there appeared before me always a *little* boy . . .

. . . Tugging at my dress as I went about my work and pleading, sleepily, "Tell me 'tory, Muddy." Tenderly smoothing my wet cheeks in those first awful days of tragedy after the Gray Wolf had stricken us,

and murmuring: "Don't c'y, Muddy. Boy loves 'er."

. . . Mischievously hiding when called, while explaining in detail where he was. Rushing in from first days at school to recount the thrilling experiences. Shouting with joy at the first snowfall. Drooping with humiliation and penitence when he ran away from school to go chestnutting and I would not write an excuse, but insisted that he tell teacher the whole truth. Brushing close against me as we walked together under a row of maples one moonlit night in June, when, at the age of twelve, he told me about *her!*

There came to mind, too, those later days when he came to me with the new and throbbing problems of his adolescence; when he explained great plans for next summer's financial ventures; when he got into boyish scrapes, and came, long-faced and fearful, to be helped out of them. The big, wide seat in my room, the wide leather chair in the library, the deep old Turkish divan which we bought at an auction—all these have been our corners of confidence. These pictures kept slipping before me that night, a vivid panorama of all his dear, beautiful days. And then I would force myself out

of the blur and mist of the past into the heartaching present.

I tried to think back over the days between that 7th of April—but little over two weeks ago—when the boys of our town stood up at the first call as "Volunteers." All I could get was the figure of the child of my heart, tall and slender, rising slowly, bending a little as he stood, and turning back to catch my eye, but straightening proudly to his feet to face the recruiting officer amid the crackle of clapping hands. And my feeling of surprise that I was clapping, too. And the memory that as we went out of the hall that night and he came eagerly forward to join me . . . the shadows on the late snow looked red, like great patches of —something unspeakable upon a battle-field.

I know that, glad and proud as I was, for long hours in the night I lay staring into the dark, almost hoping he would not pass the physical test. I know I often got up softly in those hours and went to look at his face in boyish repose lying so young and tenderly upon the pillow. I remembered how on the night before they took their physical examination, Jack Daley stayed at our house with Boy; how neither of them slept—they tossed about and talked; how excited

they were; how they scrubbed and bathed and then ate all they could hold, so that they surely would not come short in weight; how I could not work, or stay in the house, but walked with Mac, who seemed intuitively anxious, nosing at my heels. How when Boy came rushing home to shout triumphantly, "I've passed. Jack and I both passed!" I had to sit down, too weak to catch my breath, but knew that I, too, was glad and that I was glad I was glad. (I am finding out so many queer things about myself—sounding depths and touching sides I didn't know I had—after thinking I knew all there was to be known of feeling and suffering.) He was standing before me with shining eyes and eager lips, waiting for my congratulations, and I am so glad I could give them with dry eyes and a steady voice and hand. Then they went down-street, heads high and feet measuring the martial air their souls were hearing, to be halted by men many years their senior, men of business, men of office; to be taken by the hand, not benignly, not paternally or patronizingly in the former manner of such when not critical or barely tolerant, but as one man greets another whom he honors.

Then came the swift, eager, exciting days

of preparation; visits to the dentist, purchase of underclothing and toilet articles such as Uncle Sam was not quite prepared to furnish; a wrist watch, and a blue bandana they *must* have — "The officer said so, Mother. He said we'd have to do our own washing at the armory and to get blue." So, blue we got, and blue it was with superfluous quantities of dye which came out generously and put a dissolute nose upon an innocent boyish face.

Easter Sunday came, and there was a dim and beautiful early service at the church where boys sat beside their mothers, and mothers walked beside their sons up the aisle and knelt with them at the altar, and choked upon the bread and spilled the wine. Three were widowed mothers, and there was one old father who sat beside his son and constantly took off his glasses to wipe them.

When we got home there was a lovely corsage bouquet of rosebuds from Boy.

Such were the visions that alternated now before my unseeing eyes, until finally the panorama of childish and youthful days fled before the blare of drum and fife, and we were out in the night and my soldier-boy was waiting for me, his own young soul torn and tender.

That night, as I turned out my lights and went into his room for the final good-night, he put up his arms and drew me down to him, as he had done of old when a nightmare frightened him and I went in to soothe. The same dear lips that had drawn their nourishment from my breast, the same dear arms that had clasped my neck in infancy. He, too, had been lying awake, staring into the dark. . . .

. . . . . .

This last-morning breakfast was a sorry meal. We tried to make light of it, tried to joke and laugh, talked about the training and the wonderfully fine thing it would be for them—"The war 'll be over in a few weeks and then we'll have a grand celebration." But eyes and appetite would not lie. Underneath, the unspoken agony—"This is the last day. This is the last day."

Then lunch and the same foolish talk, the same staring eyes, the same choking throats; then a little clinging together, outwardly a smile, but inwardly a rending and crashing and tearing as if all the pillars that upheld all the earth were overthrown.

Finally the street—lines of people on either side, the same people who stood there last summer to see the circus parade—grave-faced people now, with no little paper bags

in their hands and no light chaffing upon their lips. The band, the officials, and "our boys" marching silently, proudly over the street where a few weeks ago they had wrestled and run.

And now—silence. Over all the world a silence—because *he* is gone.

I sustain myself with the belief that our President and our Government recognize the preciousness of these young lives, and will not thrust them into needless danger. I compel myself to look upon it as a soul-developing experience for them—and for us. I insist upon thinking of the wonderful training for the body. I know they will be finer, better, stronger men for the experience, and make myself believe that they will return to us safe and sound. But—no matter what comes, I would rather my son stood up and did his duty, got his experiences of life, learned depths of suffering and heights of sacrifice, expanded *all* his nature, than to have him sit in safety and die in dotage.

> Gnaw my withers, rack my bones,
> Life, more life, for all atones.

This sounds like a creed. From the further application of it I hope I shall not flinch.

II

PUTTING AWAY

ONCE before I had put away clothes, and toys, and books—all those dear intimate things—that time when the Gray Wolf . . . the thief that came to steal, filching our treasure from before our very eyes for his lair and leaving neither trace that we could see of his direction nor any crumb of comfort in our desolation. Long, weary, anguished days later, yes, and months, and into the years—I came to see that the Gray Wolf was but a shadow, a shadow seen through ignorance and superstition; I came to know that the trail could be followed, and that comfort and sustenance were ours for the asking. But at the first, when all I could hear was the snap of those cruel teeth, and all I could sense was the desolate emptiness where he had been for prey, my heart cried out: "Where has he gone? Into what terrible crater of Eternity has he fallen? Oh,

my son, my son, would God *I* had died for thee!" The old parent cry, world over.

Now another son has gone from me, and my fearful soul looks after him, appalled. "Where has he gone? Into what red and fiery ways have his feet been bidden? Oh, my son, my son, would God *I* could die for thee!"

Happily would I fare forth into the din of battle, glad and unafraid, if so I might keep him that I bore in anguish safe from pain or death. But, here I must sit, warm, comfortable, protected from danger, safe; while he, the child standing but yesterday high as my knee, goes valiantly out to keep the enemy from our doors. And as I sit I write, not the better to acquaint myself with the grief and apprehension that sit upon my soul like birds of evil, but to ease my outraged heart. I can write of those earlier days when we dwelt in peaceful security and our lads wore only the look of youth, and find a moment's calm where, otherwise, looking into the eyes of my fellow-sufferers, or listening to their voices, there is only echo of the storm which sweeps the world.

Or, writing of the present pain, I find relief in tears, and, soothed, go about my work again.

. . . . . .

PUTTING AWAY

To-day I have been putting away his things. Only those who have picked up the loved possessions of one who has gone out into danger or the Silence know how the soul is torn at such a time. His clothes held the imprint—almost still the warmth—of his dear boyish body—that warm tender flesh. Thought shrinks from thought of the ease with which it might yield. . . .

I have aired and folded and laid them away, steeped in cedar against his return. His newest and best suit he sold, because—

"You see, Mother, when I come back I shall be so much broader and heavier and straighter that I couldn't ever wear these, anyway, and I might just as well have the money."

I had small care for argument, but I thought with a smile of the day, only a few months ago, when he came home the proud possessor of that last suit, and of the boyish pride and pleasure with which he had arrayed himself, to the last article a subdued and perfect harmony—shirt, tie, socks, suit, and hat. Of how he had picked up my walking-stick and minced, an inimitable dandy, up and down my room and the hall, waiting for some young guests whom we were expecting.

"Some boy, eh, Muddy?" strutting in front of my long mirror, innocently to admire his grimacing self. And then, forgetting the perfect crease in his trousers and the utterly correct tilt of his very becoming hat, to give me an old-time hug, only to remember instantly the proper display of silken hose, and remark for the dozenth time:

"Gee! I wish they'd hustle up. Don't laugh, Mom, when they come. I'm going to meet them just like this"—with a wide sweep of the hat, and the walking-stick crooked upon his arm.

Only a few months ago—laughing, care-free, a whistling, playing, loving boy. Can it be that it was the same, the grim-faced youth who marched away to the sinister roll of drums? And can it be that the laughing, playing, whistling youth *will never come back?* Return, he may, in the flesh—we pray God so. But in the spirit, the *Boy* will never return. Cut off almost in an instant that care-free spirit; shut into the past along with childish things, while the soul of the Man is called forth, full stature, to take its place.

To-day I have tried consciously to bring out the scenes of his childhood, but they will not stay. I see him coming eagerly to join me that night after he had offered his young

life to his country, and always I am haunted with the menacing shadows that lay crimson upon the snow. I see him leaning forward in that long line of youths who sat so straight and still before a solemn and respectful people, his eyes eagerly seeking mine; I see him marching at the head of a little column on its way to a waiting train while many flags fluttered and waved above their heads; and I remember how, as the flags waved and swayed, I seemed to see bayonets above them, gleaming in the sun.

His school-books I have placed in orderly row upon the long shelf in his room. Once I put away some other school-books, a first reader and a little thumb-marked writing-pad on which some childish printing is to this day cherished as books of gold are not.

His playthings, his tennis-racquet, Indian clubs, balls and bats and gloves, I shall leave where they are. Before, when a little boy went suddenly away, I could not endure the sight of all the things his warm small hands had suddenly dropped. Fear was with me then. Fear that he *was not*, or fear that he *was*, and crying for me in his fright and loneliness. I knew no Home wherein he might have been gathered, no kindly Father to whom I might intrust him. Later, I found

them both—the Home, and the loving Father therein, and, knowing then that the little boy was safe, I brought out his drum again and hung it over my desk, so to keep him near me.

Now that this brother, too, is called, I can let him go, for I know that, even if he return not to *me*, there is One walking with him, though it be through a fiery furnace.

The piano is hardest to face. I came in at dusk, and the rooms were so horribly silent that it was like an unearthly noise striking full in the face. So often when I came in at this hour from my long day's work—this hour to which I have all day looked forward—the sound of piano, violin, banjo, and boyish voices has reached me half a block away.

I turned on the lights and there was his music on the rack—"Where Do We Go From Here?"

And the book of old songs, and his cap on the bench. I wanted to grab up that cap and weep into it a flood of pent-up tears. But there is something to be said of the mothers of soldiers.

So I turned tail and ran away to clatter dishes and pots and pans in the kitchen. *I did not dare to touch it.* Later, fortified by

this business of homely work, I returned to find that Mac had taken the cap into his possession and was holding it forlornly between his paws. This, on top of a silent house and prospective lonely meals, was almost too much for even the most stolid of kitchen-maids; but I sat down resolutely upon the bench, determined to accustom myself to this room and every other without the echo of his laughter, his call, his whistle.

Stoically I turned the music upon the rack, opening the book of old songs to page after page of his favorites. During those last days before they went away they had chosen the patriotic airs, and night after night the very pans had rattled an accompaniment to "The Red, the White, the Blue," and the "Marseillaise." The thrill and power of that stirring hymn! But I never noticed before what a note of pathos and tragedy there is in our own "America."

I loved these singing nights, though I had to sit in the shadow and knit very fast indeed, while their boyish voices rang out so joyously—so carelessly. One can knit and see other things than the growing garment, and as I knit I saw them, now singing in a foreign land—about a camp-fire, a lonely

camp-fire in the dark, their voices deeper and husky, their throats aching.

And sitting here at the piano alone tonight I saw them again—and, coward that I am, I had to shut the music and go out into the night to walk and walk and walk. Mac whined plaintively, and would not leave the cap and come with me; so we took it with us.

I am glad I am a business woman. That other time, I feverishly sewed and swept and cleaned, seeking to benumb the heart's anguish with fatigue of the flesh. I sank grief for the one gone, in service to those who were left. It was a good way; I shall follow it again.

Among his possessions I came across a little framed picture of his childhood's sweetheart, the little girl of the story he told me under the maples. She has been away of late, but I know his thoughts have been turning to her. He was a bit envious of Jack Daley and his fiancée. These had been almost inseparable during the last weeks, and their devotion had been so intensified and so tender, because of the coming separation, that Boy, after his first indignant outburst that Jack was so little *his*, was plainly envious.

"Gee! Mother," he said, one night when some one of the many social functions given for them was in process, "I wish I had a girl. Not *any* girl." He was adjusting a necktie of autumn tints at the glass and turned to forestall the surprise he saw in my face. "Of course, there are plenty of girls to go with. But I wish I had a *real* girl—a girl to miss me, and—and—oh, a girl like Jack's got."

For a brief instant the maternal heart was bitterly jealous and un-Christianly thankful, but not for long. Not for nothing has this scarred and battered old soul had its lessons in quick adjustment.

"So do I, dear." And, honestly, I meant it, that soon. "I think it is a wonderful influence and an anchor. I should be glad."

"Even"—he came over to where I stood watching in adoration, and put both hands on my shoulders, looking with clear gray eyes into mine—"even if I—if I *loved* her, Muddy?"

"Even if you loved her, son." I think my gaze was quite as steady as his.

"Gee! but you're a brick, Mom!"—hugging me to him with his young strong arms. "Anyway, you're sweetheart enough for any chap."

But I was not, after all, as I knew quite well I should not be for long. *She* was there that night, and all of a sudden they were no longer childish lovers, but youth and maid, and the divine spark was struck between them. A very few days later he told me about it—came to my bedside and sat down when he came in, as he often did at night. A hushed wonderment upon his face and in his voice told me before his words did, and gave me time to make room for her.

"I can't believe it, Mother," he said, stroking my hand, but seeing, I knew, a smaller, whiter one instead. "It seems so *wonderful!* Why, Mother, she's loved me—she told me so—all along. And now"—he talked in broken snatches as if picking old thoughts out of new chaos—"now that we—we *understand*, I know I've loved her, too. And, Mother, she's the sweetest thing. She loves you, too, and she'll—she wants to be a comfort *to you.*"

"She will, dear. And I shall love her dearly. I always have."

"Oh, *Mother!*" He buried a warm boy's face beside mine on the pillow. It was all he could say, for his heart was full. His good-night kiss—never once missed in all his nineteen-and-a-half years except when away

from me—was tenderer than usual, and his movements as he went to his room were slow and mechanical. He was moving in a dream, the old, old beautiful dream which was so new to him, and so fresh and sweet and startling in its beauty. I heard him turning in his porch bed outside my window for a long time, and I knew that he was looking up into the starry spaces and thinking of the sweetheart he would leave behind him on the long, long trail. And, truly, I was not jealous. I rejoiced with him. He had not brought another in to take my place—he had room for us both. Just now the splendor of it dazzled him and he could see only her. But I had had my glorious possession in him—I should continue to have it, and I could afford to stand aside for a little to let them walk, alone in their young wonder.

She had to go away again, all too soon, so their hours were short, but it was sufficient to bind them together for all time. He is already deepened by it. The feeling that she will miss him, will mourn his going, will wait for his return; the sense of responsibility; the fact that one depends on him for all her future—these have put their mark upon him. He is a Man now.

. . . . . .

When we came in, Mac and I, we brought the cap up-stairs with us. It hangs against the top of my bed, with his picture.

. . . . . .

U. S. Armory.

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—Well, here we are, settled. We slept fine last night—*not.* The rough-necks hollered and yelled and sang until about twelve o'clock, and then Co. G came marching in at 2.30 and kept us awake the rest of the night. They have been doing guard-duty somewhere in the Catskills. I suppose they thought it lots of fun to find a gang of 'rookies' in the armory. At any rate, they hauled us about, pulled our blankets off, and raised the deuce generally. I finally dropped off about five, to be awakened again at six by the bums, who didn't go to bed at all.

"We went out to breakfast and came directly back, although we didn't have to report until 1.30. There doesn't seem to be any place to go, so here we are. Most of us sitting on our cots writing letters on our suit-cases. Funny how suddenly and furiously we're all smitten with the ambition to write letters. No, of *course* we're not homesick!

We just like to write letters. We always did.

"The Armory is a dandy place, Mom. There is a pool and billiard table, card and writing tables, office and quarters and drill-room on the first floor. The rifle-range is down-stairs, and there are shower-baths. It is more like a club than anything else.

"I'll send some pictures when we get our uniforms. Come over as soon as you can, because we don't know how soon we'll leave. The worst of the army business is that we never know what's going to happen until it happens.

"Gee! Mom, you were a dandy sport yesterday! It bucked me up to see you, the last thing, sending out a smile. Some of the fellows were all broken up, the way their mothers took on. Keep on being a sport—*and don't you cry.*

"SON.

"P.S.—Sometimes, Mommy, after 'lights out' it seems a bit solemn. We're a step nearer what we came in for—*and we're glad we're here.*"

III

COURAGE—OR CAMOUFLAGE?

THE days go by. Birds sing, children play, and the air is full of the sweet smells from the hills. Men—and the children, too—are working in the gardens and the fields, and the scent of the clean, soft earth greets us as we go forth into the smiling day. How can we realize that "Over There" beyond the green hills and the fresh fields and the smiling sea—the dreadfully smiling sea—there is the uproar of ceaseless strife, the tumult of a world in armed conflict! Sons of mothers of many, many lands!

Up and down the streets in the sunshine old men walk, and talk together about war; about old wars, and *the* War. Everybody talks about the War. It lies upon our hearts now as never before. Over There they have been *living* in war for many, many months. How must it seem when war is the normal condition in life, when the old, sweet, hum-

drum life is gone, like a dream, and the fearful Reality is knocking at every door, at every heart? Everybody talking about the War, with nerves jangling.

I have just been on a business trip to a little town not far away. It was the same there. Mothers of sons, with tense faces and voices, trying to be brave. Over knitting we talked; mostly about conscription.

"*I* don't think it's fair," cried a woman who has two sons of eligible age. "We supposed we lived in a free country, and if my boys don't want to enlist, why should they be made to? They tell us we are going into this war to fight for freedom, and they go against the very principle of freedom when they compel our boys to go to war against their will."

She has two other boys and a daughter to stay at home with her, and a father to her children who will help bear—whatever comes to be borne. But for her each of the boys who might be called was a separate anxiety. I knew exactly how she loved each one. I wondered if I might not help her, and the others, too.

"Let me tell you how I see this thing," I said. "My son has gone. I have no other child; nor have I father, mother, husband,

brother, sister, uncle, or aunt—nor any other living relative except some distant cousins living far away, whom I seldom see. This son of mine is my one great treasure, the apple of my eye. He is all that is closest to me by virtue of human ties. I am not dependent upon him for support, but I am dependent upon him for those even more precious things—love and tenderest care, given and taken. He is my excuse for making and keeping a home. His care is all I have to look forward to in old age, except for what friend or stranger might give out of a kindly heart."

As I paused to get fresh hold upon myself, I felt the eyes of the other women upon my face—I dared not look up from my knitting. No one spoke, and pretty soon I was able to go on:

"When we talked this matter over—my boy and I—and saw that our country was going to need the service of its young men . . . sons, every one of them, of mothers as fond of them and as proud of them as I was of my own . . . I saw a light dawning in his eyes, I felt the spirit of immolation for the sake of something greater than himself or myself glowing out from his eager, brave young heart. And I was glad and

proud to step back out of the first place in his life. What could I do but say, 'Of course, my son, go wherever there is need of you'?"

"But the mothers always have to give so much, so much!" The little woman who said this was biting her lips to keep back the tears.

"It always has been so," a white-haired woman said. She was looking out of the window, and I fancied she was seeing a vision of long years ago—boys in blue marching away to the South. "Always the mothers who have to give and give, and suffer."

"It tore my heart," I continued, "when I saw him on the cars, and the train took him away from me. He volunteered, with my full consent, but with his going the great light of my life seemed to go out. And I was proud and glad, too. And yet, I did feel resentment that my son should feel that he must leave his home, his friends, his mother, and his work, and go to take his place on the line of defense for his country when so many other youths, equally able physically, equally under obligation, were hanging back. Some one has spoken of fairness. Surely it wasn't fair that those thirty

boys from our little village should go out to live a life of hardship, privation, and enter actual fighting lines, to protect the homes and lives of thirty other boys in some other village who had not lifted a finger!"

There was a long silence, broken only by the clicking of needles. Somebody sighed, very audibly. The first speaker had stopped knitting and was looking intently at her hands in her lap. My heart ached for the ache that was gripping hers. For I knew, too, that she would not make it harder for her boys when their time came. There is a look that comes into the faces of mothers when they have made the decision to give up their sons. I have come to know that look.

"Do you think"—the voice of a little woman dressed all in black—"that every young man who can should volunteer? Are there any—justified—in waiting for the call?"

"Oh—absolutely!" I was eager to make myself clear on this. "We always admire and reverence the spirit which offers itself, freely and unreservedly, but many cannot. There are personal responsibilities; it is no small thing to—to desolate homes right and left. One of the most eager and valiant-spirited youths in our village is held by the weak and helpless hands of an aged and

invalid mother. I think it takes much more courage and a finer sense of duty for him to stay at home than it would to go into the most dreadful danger of the battle."

"It needs a greater bravery to stay in an obscure and safe place than it does to follow the drums and the flags," interposed the white-haired woman.

"A boy mustn't be called a slacker until he shows the yellow flag in the face of duty," I said. "We must keep things going here behind the lines. Manufacturing, education, and as much as possible of the normal social and civic life must be maintained. England learned at shocking cost that she could not afford to depopulate her colleges, her factories, her farms, and her shipyards by allowing the rush of her best youth to the battle-line. Thousands of her finest young men . . ."

"So *that* is why they call it the 'selective draft'?" said she who had first protested. "Conscription is such a hateful word!"

"Uncle Sam has arranged a system by which to call out the young men as he needs them and take care of them, and leave at their posts here the ones who can render better and more useful service there. We *must* believe"—I said this with a kind of

desperation that I remembered afterward—"we *must* believe that he will not take them needlessly, and that he will guard their young lives zealously. I think they can quietly wait until they are called, and then go as gallantly, as proudly, as those that volunteered."

"I hadn't thought of it in that way," she said. She raised her head and looked straight at me. I thought there was a new expression in her face. "You have helped me, more than you know. I see it differently. I guess it is the fairer way."

"Well, *I* don't feel that way about it at all!" This was a new voice, and the snap and harshness of it made us all jump. Nerves were still very tense. "*I* don't feel that way about it, and I'm not going to let my boy go without putting up a fight. It isn't our war. We've just been dragged into it." The speaker was, as I knew, the wife of a wealthy farmer; their boy was an only son. Their farm skirted the village and the son of their nearest neighbor had enlisted at the first whisper of a draft. It was this neighbor who turned upon her, flushed and indignant:

"Of course we've been dragged into it! And who dragged us in? You didn't think

the United States was *looking* for a war, did you? We can't lie down, can we? If you heard screams and cries in the night and rushed out to find that your big, burly, drunken neighbor was beating his wife and children to death, you wouldn't wait to be asked whether you wanted to stop the murder, would you? And you wouldn't stand away and say that it wasn't your fight, would you? I guess *not!* We have been dragged into it, and now that we've been dragged in, who's going to drag us out? Who but our own selves, and that means . . ."

"That's just it! Ourselves—if only *we* could go! If it didn't have to be our little lads—" The gentle voice broke right there. She is, like me, the mother of a fatherless boy. She tried to go on, a bit huskily:

"If only *we* could go! If only—" She stopped dead. Each woman there went on with the thought that pierced every heart. Arguments, however perfect, however logical, however convincing to the intellect and the sense of justice, could do so little to assuage that mother-instinct! If only *we* could go—not to shield them as of old with our bodies, but just to *be near* them! But the time had come; they were going away. They would be better, stronger, without our

brooding affection, our petting. At last some one said:

"Thank God, we shall be very busy, working for them here. There is plenty for us to do."

. . . . . .

Each time that I see him now, before the last days come, my eyes so fill with tears that his dear face blurs and I must turn away. For that is part of my burden, too; I must not let him know my suffering, my apprehension, my fears. I must keep up my courage for his sake. What he has done is no impulsive, lightsome deed. He recognizes the seriousness of it. He knows what may lie before him. He loves his home, and life is exceedingly sweet to youth. He is eager for the fray, eager to "get it over with," to "do his bit," but *he must not see the white feather in his mother's cap* He must see a steady smile on her lips and courage in her eye to the very last. The thought of her, living bravely and serenely, must sustain him. The memory of his home that is waiting for him must warm and hearten him. That is my share.

Over and over in my empty house I have to repeat the argument. I have to set down words like a lesson, and then read them and

learn them and say them, else I cannot endure. I am fine and brave while I write them, but there come other hours when courage oozes. Then I read my fine words. I strike my heels together. I lift my head and I "carry on." This is our part—to "carry on" at home.

IV

IN KHAKI CLAD

U. S. Armory.

"DO come to see me, Muddy. We've got uniforms—not our own, yet, but some hand-me-downs. But don't expect me to go out with you. The uniform I've got is about three sizes too small. The tails of the coat stick out of the small of my back, and make me think of that song, 'Oh, had I the wings of a dove!' I always wondered how a full-size man would look with the wings of a dove, and this coat makes me look as if I had the tail of a rooster. But I'm crazy to see you."

Gladly I went. The Armory is not too far away, and I went on Saturday to stay over Sunday. To my surprise and joy the Boy met me—a soldier-boy clad all in brown. He had traded with a smaller chap whose lot had been equally embarrassing to him, and

there he stood, a smiling six feet of sturdy, handsome youth, the uniform lending a dignity to boyish eagerness.

We went first to the Armory, where I was made acquainted with all its smoky virtues, shown the cots where they slept, the mess-table where they ate, the pool-room and card-rooms where they played, and taken for an awesome peep into the rifle-range where they were learning to . . . I was introduced to Corporal This, and Sergeant That, and Lieutenant Somebody Else, and then we went out to lunch. After lunch he must report for duty, and there we received the joyous news that all the boys were to be allowed to go home for over Sunday. Their first "furlough," they called it.

Such howling and shouting and packing up of unnecessary things; such a mob of dominating dull brown color on the home-train; such a swift pouring of khaki uniforms down the old main street; such wonderment as turned out from village home and store and office; such greetings; such proud and respectful attention! A great home-coming that, after two weeks' sleeping on cots in a big, barn-like armory and "falling in for mess." You'd have thought they had been gone for a quarter of a century.

Mac did not know Boy, at first. He sniffed the uniform inquiringly and suspiciously, and then leaped upon its wearer with whines and yelps of delight.

How handsome he is in his uniform! How handsome they all are, of course, but *mine* especially. Every mother is saying that, all over the land. He wears Uncle Sam's clothes now, and eats Uncle Sam's food, but he is *mine*, yet. . . . There is a new thought there—a troublesome one. One that lifts the pen from page, and the eye to gaze off into an apprehensive distance. *Is* he—*mine?* Or have I—relinquished—? *Must* I relinquish altogether, before the gift is complete? I cannot think quite clearly, yet. Just now I can only love—and love. Perhaps, as I see more clearly, as strength grows . . .

I have never yet found the burden laid upon me greater than the strength of my shoulders. Will it be so, now? It *must* be so, now.

. . . . . .

They came home, and thirty young and, until a few weeks ago, utterly irresponsible and callow youths dominated the town. Wherever a khaki uniform appeared there

was a group of respectful followers and listeners. It was their hour. Old men, business men, young men who have not yet gone in, and boys, all were eager to shake their hands and listen to their words. As for the women and girls—well, we are the mothers and sisters and sweethearts; we proudly and humbly worshiped.

And right away our opinion of the whole United States army is changed. Once, when I lived in a big city and near an army post, the sight of a soldier did not inspire us with awe, or respect, or even a feeling of safety. The army was made up of those who wanted a job they could "soldier at." The expression "soldiering" at one's work came out of the general contempt. Now, however, we *know* the stuff our army is made of. It is made of *our boys*. It is the noblest and finest and grandest institution on the face of the earth. We revere the khaki uniform. It clothes the forms of those who are dearer to us than our own lives. It means that the best of the young manhood of our nation has left home and friends and position and comfort and security to go out into hardship and danger to battle for their loved ones and their country. No words are too strong, no emotion too deep, to express what we

feel toward the United States army *now*. As never before, it is *our* army.

. . . . . .

They came home; they had this little hour of triumph; they marched stiffly along the village street, not impervious to admiring eyes; they went through maneuvers in the parlor and on the stairs, calling to one another, "Halt!" "About Face!" and other unintelligible but evidently satisfactory commands, and "showed off" to their hearts' content and the fatuous delight of their families. Then they bade us good-by again and went back to the Armory by the earliest morning train. The rumor is that there will be but a few days now before they are sent to training-camp.

In our quiet little village summer is coming. They are putting the boats on the Lake and preparing for a season of pleasure. I wonder, often, how any one can prepare, consciously, for pleasure—*now*. I look at the hills and think that beyond them, and beyond the fields so fair and green in their summer livery, are other fields, where the grass is torn and sodden.

. . . . . .

I miss his whistle so. He had a way of coming in at meal-time and whistling to me

—a certain distinctive whistle that was ours alone; or, if he was out late at night, the whistle would reach me before ever his foot touched the step. Mac knew it and listens for it now.

I am glad he was always sure of me, sure of finding his meals ready, of finding my light waiting for him, no matter how late his home-coming at night; sure of my sympathy and understanding and readiness and love. I am glad I have chosen to make a comfortable and attractive home for him at the expense of any personal luxury, travel, or other advantages I might have had. Surely that background of pleasant rooms with pictures and easy lounging-places—none too good for a boy and a dog—music and books upon books, with a mother who was always "standing by," will color his life so effectually that the temptations and crudities of an army life cannot lead him far astray.

Apprehensive and anxious though my heart must be, I have no fear of his being contaminated by that evil which menaces any great body of men. . . . From his infancy we have discussed all matters pertaining to bodily welfare with the utmost frankness. He understands clearly the danger

that lies in laxity of morals. Now, too, there is the further safety lying in the desire to keep clean and decent for *her* sake.

"You don't have to worry about me *that* way, Mom," he said, on one of those precious last-day confidences. "Anything like that disgusts me so it makes me sick."

That, I believe, is the natural and normal attitude of all boys who are rightly taught and who have the right home background. The foolish old hearsay that "boys will be boys," and must, therefore, necessarily "sow their wild oats" and reap a harvest of disease and remorse, has always made me mad. A boy has unlimited energy which must have vent, but, given a chance, he will infinitely prefer to expend it in playing football or tennis than in a saloon or brothel. . . . I grow heated over the false and hateful doctrine that has so wide a currency. I have seen its falsity proved over and over, and when the world and all its people recognize its unfair and iniquitous teaching, even a boy will have a better chance.

. . . . . .

This postscript at the end of a letter which came as I write this very line goes far to confirm my belief, with that of the Hired Man, that

All chillerns good
If they's only understood.

"I thought you'd like to know that Uncle Sam doesn't forget any details in looking after the health of his boys. We were issued pamphlets to-day warning us of the dangers of venereal diseases. Maybe I didn't think tenderly and gratefully of the dearest mother in the world, and of all your wise teachings and our talks. I fancy lots of mothers would think they couldn't talk with their sons as you have with me, but if they only did it would save oceans of trouble. Or if even fathers would do it. But they don't or, if they do, they don't make it strong enough.

"This is only a line, but I thought you'd like to know that our Uncle is looking out for us."

. . . . . .

More than the whistle do I miss his voice. First thing when he came into the house was his whistle, and then the call, "Oh, Mom!" I think the first thing all men do when they come into their homes is to lift up their voices in search of their woman—the woman who makes home for them. Man's "independence" is another myth and delusion. Every man, if he is any good, is so

dependent upon some woman that he is absolutely helpless if she is long removed from him. He may not know it, may not admit it if he does know it, and may not consciously think of her through all his busy day while things are going well. But let his affairs get muddled, let him get sick, or hungry, or lonely, let him shut the doors on his business and start for home, and all at once he is as eager for her and as dependent upon her and homesick for her, if she is away, as was ever a kid of six.

When he enters his own door his first call is for her. All the years of my father's long life, I never once knew him to come into the house without calling, "Mother!" Or, if she was not in sight and some one else was, his greeting was just as surely, "Where is Mother?"

Boy has a variety of names for me. During high-school days, when his ego was most dominant and most in evidence, he called me "Mater" in a condescending tone of great dignity. When he came in, ruddy and hungry, he would shout, "*Oh, Mom!*" at the top of his lusty lungs. When he was hurt or sick and needed coddling a bit, "Muddy" was the name that brought me to his side. And when he was stricken with some

boyish catastrophe, or deeply touched and stirred, he called me simply "Mother." . . .

Why do I say, "he was," "he did"? Is it already all in the past? Have I—given him up?

. . . . . .

A letter from Her:

"DEAREST MUDDY,—I may call you that, mayn't I? It is so dear and good of you to take me into your heart and let me share him with you. I can hardly realize this wonderful and beautiful thing that has come to me, Muddy. And cruel, too. It is cruel that, just as we found our happiness, we should face this awful danger of losing it. And yet—we wouldn't have it otherwise, would we? We love him because he is just what he is, and, being what he is, he couldn't do anything but the finest. That may not be very clear logic, Muddy, but you understand.

"It is good of you to say I may write you often. I may not always be very brave—though I shall try to be. It will be a comfort to come to you. And maybe I can be something to you, too. I want to.

"YOUR GIRL—AND HIS."

. . . . . .

U. S. Armory.

"MOTHER DEAR,—We drilled three hours this morning, and that was fun. But this afternoon we hiked about eight miles and, as a result, I have a blister an inch in diameter on the heel of each foot and they're sore as anything. But I'm having a great old time, and already I feel the physical effects. I passed the Federal examination to-day at 100%. So now I'm a soldier, for fair. We are to be mustered out of the militia and into the Federal Army.

"Mom, I wish you'd send me three pairs of heavy woolen socks. Gee! but I need 'em! *Heavy*, too. The light ones wear out too durn quick and they're not much protection on these hikes.

"And will you send some of my music, especially 'Where Do We Go From Here?' And all the banjo and ukelele strings you can find, and the key to the banjo? It's in the bottom drawer of the dresser in my room.

"SON.

"P.S.—Never mind sending these things, because I'm coming home to-morrow night.

"SON."

. . . . . .

Once more the brown uniforms colored our streets and the faces of our citizens shone

with pride. And this day She was here—he calls her "Jimsy-Girl." Proudly she walked beside him, her lovely face flushing and glowing as friends stopped them on the street to offer the stereotyped felicitations. Perhaps in some instances these were sincere, but I think many of her family's old friends consider her choice an ill-advised one. Boy is very young, and so is she. He has no rich father to start him in life; only the wit of his own brain and the eagerness of his long, clever fingers.

He had already been to see her father. I liked the spirit with which he did that, for either it took courage for a penniless boy to ask the hand of the beautiful and winning daughter of an influential man, or else his youthful ego helped him through. In any event, he made the manly advance, he was received, and his suit was not rejected. That, at least, is something for a youth who depends only upon himself for a future, and I am glad that, in these days of youthful arrogance and "independence," he did the decent thing.

They were very happy together, happy with that touch of tragedy to their content which lends warmth to tenderness and pathos to joy. Considerate, too—enveloping me in

the generous mantle of their love, seeking to make me feel not so much my loss as my gain. I rejoiced that such richness had come to the child of my own young love, nor felt that what he had to give was unworthy of her great regard.

When he went this time, we stood together, she and I, until he had passed. And we smiled him out of sight, nor crumpled one small jot from that brave air we had elected. But when he had gone, when the sense of our desolation had settled down upon us, knowing this to be the last dear glimpse of him for many anxious days—perhaps months—or years—straightway we looked into each other's eyes nor sought to hide the dread and anguish written there; we clasped each other's hands without a word, then—she went her way, and I went mine—each in her daily duties and the large activities of a woman's life in these days, to find escape.

V

WHISTLING THROUGH A GRAVEYARD

GONE. Not out of our country, yet, but out of our sight. Gone from the Armory which had come to be a sort of settled thing with us, and where we could go often and pridefully watch them drill and march and maneuver; to their first camp.

I was away from home when the telegram came; it was forwarded to me, and the train could not move swiftly enough to take me where I could at least be near him on that last night.

There was a brave show of cheerfulness—not too much lingering as our hands met. We went to dinner together, talked broken and banal nothings, carefully avoiding all mention of home topics or the imminent parting. Once I inadvertently spoke of Mac and told how for several days following Boy's last home visit the dog ran jubilantly

after any passing uniform—only to return baffled and bewildered. Instantly I saw by the sweeping shadow on Boy's face that I had chosen an unwise subject, and quickly switched to the movie we were going to attend, or some other equally trivial matter.

We went to the movies. There in the dark, Boy's big warm hand stole over to mine. That nearly undid me and I was grateful for the sheltering dark. It was pretty dreadful, but, oh, so sweet! I cannot recall one thing about the show except that. After the performance he went with me to my room at the hotel; moved restlessly about, whistled, picked up my things from the dressing-table, whistled, and put them down. He said little and did not stay long. We even hurried through the last embrace.

"I'll run over in the morning, Muddy," he said. But in the morning he telephoned instead.

"I don't dare come over, Mother. . . . And you'd better not stay till we go. Did you hear me whistle under your window after I went last night?"

I had not—for the very good reason that when the door closed upon him I had buried my head on one pillow, with the other on top. But I did not tell him that.

"I guess it wasn't much of a whistle—" His voice was a little unsteady.

"All right, son." As I spoke, a verse sang in my memory:

What we've known of stormy pain,
And of sorrow's driving rain,
We can better meet again
If they blow.

These words came providentially to my aid and my own voice was clear and strong. "All right, son. I'm going home on the morning train. Good luck to you. Write to me. You won't be gone long."

"Thanks, Muddy. S'long."

. . . . . .

I came home on the morning train and cleaned the attic. What the wood-pile is to the husband of a nagging wife an attic is to the woman in despair. After the attic, I went to the woods.

Some one who stayed to see them off told me he was the life of the departing moment. He jollied the fellows who were down, comforted the old parents with an encouraging word, and put spirit into those who wept. By his voice in those last words to me, I knew he had fought his own battle. I knew

he had had his night visions of a lonely and distant land, and that his young soul was being born anew through suffering. As I thought of that last-hour cheerfulness the phrase came to me—"whistling through a graveyard."

There was a day *en route* which he could stop and have for *her*—the little girl sweetheart. I thought, when I first knew about that, that I should be jealous of her having the last of him. . . . I found I was not. It may be that he means even more to her than he does to me. I have looked to him for care and solace through all my declining years. But—*I have had my life.* I have loved and *borne.* I have known the joy and fulfilment of fruitfulness. She depends on him for these. What I have drunk they have yet to taste. It belongs to them. Joy go with them!

. . . . . .

The days go by. I read four daily papers, snatching them hungrily from the paper-boy to devour the head-lines whole. Also, I read the book stories of the war as they come out. My blood runs cold—and hot. I want my boy at home—safe from danger and the barbarous cruelties of that treacher-

ous enemy—and I want him Over There helping to deal out justice. I should even prefer to be with him.

Confusion — indignation — unbelief. The mind registers such emotions. What has become of sanity and civilization, and *God?*

Sometimes—mostly in the night—I almost wish I had gathered up *mine* and fled with him, before his young spirit had responded, to some uttermost corner of the earth where eyes do not see red. The only place I can think of, however, which is not a part, or threatening to become a part, of this world cataclysm is Greenland. And, when daylight comes, I decide that I knew greater peace of mind to have him in the thick of it, and to be as near the thick of it myself as my years and sex will allow, than to be "safe," even in Greenland, or anywhere else. There are times when "safety first" appears not to apply to the individual, and I am afraid I could not enjoy my boy's security, with the thought of Bob and Jack and Dick in mind—to say nothing of Jacques and James Over There.

It is the nights that are troublesome. Strange what cowards the nights make of us.

One of the boys had to come home be-

cause of some physical ailment. It set me to wondering if I should be glad if my boy should develop some disability that sent him honorably home. The thing that surprises me is that *I do not know.* I would have expected myself to be unqualifiedly glad. That there should be even a doubt amazes me. I thought I was pretty well acquainted with myself, but I seem to be getting occasional glimpses of an utter stranger.

. . . . . .

I have bought some maps of the western front. I want to know that land toward which his feet are pressing.

. . . . . .

Camp ——, New York.

"DEAREST MOTHER,—This is the first chance I have had to write you, because we have been so durn busy making camp. We arrived at 6 A.M., Sunday. The train was twenty-five cars long. At 7.30 we detrained and began hiking for camp. Got here at 12.30. It was about fourteen miles over hot pavement, but little sonny made it in fine shape and has been feeling *great* all the time. This is a regular city of soldiers. There are three regiments here—about 6,000 men. Last night a lot of us got leave and

went down to the city. We went out on Brooklyn Bridge, saw the Statue of Liberty (some girl she is, Mom, quite worth fighting for); went into the Woolworth Building, and out on Riverside Drive. We saw a lot of the city.

"This morning our brigade (three regiments) went down-town on the 'L' and paraded about four miles on Fifth Avenue. There will probably be pictures in the Sunday paper. We were nearly in the middle, directly behind the colors.

"There is lots more work here than at the Armory. But, Gee! I'm glad to be out of doors and I'm going to be some husky kid.

"Mommy, I'm busted. I've had to spend 'most all my money for eats. We get enough, but we hone for *different.* And I do want to go to the Hippodrome and a few things while I'm here. What do you think about it?

"They say we're going to stay here for the *big* parade.

"I'm awfully glad neither you nor Jimsy-Girl were at the train when we left. I love you so much I couldn't have stood it.

"Always—

"SON."

. . . . . .

Camp ——.

"DEAREST MOTHER,—The box you sent was a wonder. *Is* a wonder, rather, for I have it beside me. It is 8 P.M. and I am sitting here with cookies and apples on one side of me and plums and fudge and dates on the other, and *believe me*, I'm enjoying it. I certainly will write to Mrs. C—— and the girls and thank them profusely. I told Jack that his mother made the cookies, and he grabbed one and swallowed it with his eyes shut. Maybe he had to shut 'em. Mother, the *smallest* kind of a treat now means more than any *big* treat I ever had up to three months ago. I'm certainly learning to appreciate the home I had, anyway. The box came at an especially auspicious moment this time, for I've been half-sick. I've had a cold, but in general my health is good. Our cots are cold, and *especially* did I appreciate the extra blanket you sent. And apples. I hadn't had an apple in months.

"Jimsy-Girl sent me a box last week. Oh, Mother—how I want to see you both! You aren't jealous, are you, Muddy? Because loving her has made me love you more. And, say, Mud, I've seen about a million girls in this Little Old New York they talk so much about, and not one can

hold a candle to Her. How do you suppose I put it over, Muddy? What made her think she cares for me, when there were all those Douglas Fairbanks and Howard Chandler Christy men to choose from? (Not that I think any of 'em are any better-looking, but she might have.)

"Hoping you are the same, I am

"ASSIMORA HOBO.

"P. S.—We've got straw ticks, and we sleep warmer."

. . . . . .

Straw ticks! And grateful for them! Boys who have slept on mattresses as soft as down. I am ashamed of myself that I cannot *always* keep uppermost the fine thoughts and beliefs which are with me at my best moments.

In my own youth I knew hardship and privation. I have slept in a bedroom where snow blew in upon my quilt. I have had to break the ice in the pitcher before I could wash, when I was a country school-teacher and slept in the spare room. I have waded through unbroken roads and built my own fire in the school-house stove when I got there. I have been homesick and half-clad and ill and miserable. And all of it strengthened my soul and my body. I am glad of all those experiences. They made me strong

and enabled me to understand the lives of others, and yet when my child writes that he is gratefully appreciative of *straw* to sleep on, I writhe with the thought of it. But, I know that all this is good for him. I know it. I say it over and over and over. I tell myself that we pamper our children too much; make weaklings of them by our care and solicitude. This experience will make men of them. I know that is true, and I tell it to myself constantly.

And yet, pride and panic alternate in my heart.

. . . . . .

One of the mothers from our village went to visit her son in camp. When she came back we all went to see her, to talk with her, to look into eyes that had looked upon our boys. She had been a very ordinary little woman before—no one had thought much about her or paid much attention to her, but *now* we hung upon her words. We plied her with questions. We were loath to leave her. When we meet her on the street we bow low and smile at her tenderly. *She saw our boys.*

. . . . . .

As the days go by—as the hour approaches for the next long step in the journey, I be-

gin to realize how in the beginning *I did not give him up.* I only *loaned* him for a little to his country, holding with all my might to the possession I thought mine alone. Now—I begin to see—I begin to feel—the cords are loosening. I have not once said to myself what I must say now: *He may never come back.*

. . . . . .

The great parade in New York city is over. "Your lad and my lad" have tramped for hours and hours through crowds of waving, cheering people to the martial strains of fife and drum and bugle. How I wish I might have seen them! I should like to have thrilled to that music. I should like to have added my voice to that mighty cheering, to have rested my eyes on that steadily moving river of brown uniforms that is marching, marching, marching—to the sea and over the sea and on to—victory. It *must* be victory. They cannot march in vain.

To-night just the briefest line from him:

"It has been a wonderful day, Mother. Things like this don't come often into a fellow's life. He couldn't stand it if they did.

"*Tramp, tramp, tramp!* Hours and hours of it. Thousands of faces. Thousands of flags, candy, and gum, and cigarettes thrown at us. *Tramp, tramp, tramp!* and sonny is tired to death. We shall leave now in a day or two. To what, or where, nobody knows. We only know that each time a move is made we are a step nearer that great objective point toward which thousands and thousands of us are marching. I'm glad I came, Mother, and glad I came when I did, but, between you and me, there's more than one sojer-boy what wishes it was all over and he was home in his little bed. But—it isn't, so, on we go until it is. All of us. *You, too, Momsy.*

"Good night. A TIRED BOY LOVES HIS MOTHER."

. . . . . .

From Her:

—— *Sept.* ——.

"MUDDY DEAR,—Do you know where Boy is? I've done nothing but fret all day long, and I'm so ashamed. Please don't tell him. He wrote me a special Friday night saying they were to leave this morning, but I was out of town Saturday and yesterday and did not get his letter. I wouldn't mind so

much, Muddy, if I could only know *where* they're going. It's this feeling of helplessness—of *darkness* that upsets me. I know it's foolish and I'm going to be braver from now on—like you. But if you've heard—if you know where he is, wire me, won't you? I know there's nothing to worry about—he's safe and sound somewhere and—I don't fret if I don't hear from him for days, so long as I know he's settled in one place; but when they've been moved, and we don't know where— You'll be ashamed of your girl, Muddy, but you'll forgive me, and pretty soon I'll do better. It's all so new and strange—and hard. I didn't know one could love like this, Muddy, and then, to have him taken away, farther and farther. He's so near and dear to you that you need sympathy rather than to have somebody come along to lean on you, but, oh, to-night it's not in me to write anything but just *where is he?*

"And yet—I'm so proud of him. To think he's giving up everything—his home and his future and you—and me, because he thinks it's right, and for our sakes, too.

"I'm always able to write cheerful letters to him—I wouldn't think of doing anything else, and I never shed a tear when he went

away, so don't think I'm a coward. But, oh, Muddy, why doesn't this war end?

"I don't want 'peace at any price.' It would be too dreadful to have had all these precious lives and priceless things lost in vain. I'm heart and soul with this old United States, but when it comes down to individuals, it hurts so, and, Muddy—*do you ever wonder where God is?*

"YOUR JIMSY—AND HIS."

. . . . . .

No, I didn't know where he was. And, yes—I had almost "wondered where God is."

A man said to me the other day that this terrible war had almost shattered his faith in God. That he did not see how there could be a God who would allow such a fearful calamity to happen to His world. But my faith has never for one instant faltered —yet. It has been hard, at some of these dark and blood-stained hours, to say:

God's in His Heaven,
All's right with the world.

But, nevertheless, I have been able to say it, and to believe it. God gave man freedom to reign over himself. Man had not

yet learned how to do it. There were dark places on the map of civilization. Russia was one of them—the largest and the darkest. See what the war has done for Russia. Out of bloodshed and sacrifice and sorrow has come the beacon of light for Russia's millions of children. Russia after a little will march in the line of civilization, humanity, and brotherly love, where, a few months ago, there were rank despotism, slavery, treachery, and every form of deception and ignorance.

Germany is a land ridden by Autocracy and Militarism. Her people are a part of a great machinery. The German people are a lovable people, thrifty, domestic, home-loving, kindly, given to the making of toys and the telling of fairy tales. We all have dear friends among the German people whom we love. When the war is over, and they are freed from the military yoke, we shall care for them, pity them, help them, feed them. We do not want to kill them—we want to save them from themselves, from the Autocracy that will itself kill them if left alone.

Great progress always comes through great sacrifices. Through sorrow and trouble and sacrifice the individual soul grows into high-

er estate, and so it is with nations. In great moments the individual must be sacrificed for the sake of the whole.

We are a selfish people because life has run smoothly for us. We have not been called upon for great national suffering; we have had, in our generation, no great national experiences. What we are going through now will bind us more closely together. We shall be a more united nation, and we shall have a deeper, firmer love of country, a stronger patriotism; also, we shall be more closely bound to our sister countries across the seas, because we shall have suffered with them.

"*God's in His Heaven, all's right with the world.*" It *is* all right. We are passing through deep waters and we cannot yet see the shores, but the shores are there and we shall reach them. No matter what comes to you and to me individually, when we stand by one country and one flag and the principles of Liberty and Democracy which are what our flag symbolizes, we are doing what is right and we can stand serenely.

We women must stay at home and see our loved ones go. It would be a thousand times easier for us to go into battle ourselves than to endure the thought of what may

come to the flesh and hearts of our men, but that we may not do. Ours it is to "keep the home-fires burning," to do the plenteous duties that will fall to our hands while they are gone, to send them cheery, smiling words of love, to hope and pray and trust, and to remember that

God's in His Heaven,
All's right with the world.

VI

SOMEWHERE—

"DEAREST MOM,—I'm so *dead* tired to-night that the only thing I can write is to ask you if you'll send me a bunch of things I need. I'll write more to-morrow. We arrived at camp yesterday morning and, Oh, Gee whiz! how we've worked ever since! Honestly, I'm ready to drop. Well, here goes: Can you send me

1 97c. book of 2c. stamps.
2 boxes cheap stationery and envelopes.
6 films 2¼ x 3¼ vest pocket.
3 bath-towels.
2 towels for dishes.
6 *white* handkerchiefs. (I'm done with blue ones.)
2 pairs white woolen socks.
1 50c. tube tooth-paste.
1 box razor blades.

"Gee! It takes mail a long time to reach here. If you *can* send me these things I

shall be very grateful. I haven't had a letter from you since you started on your trip. I'm so glad you are going—or gone. It will do you heaps of good; and *I* know, even if you haven't told me, how dreary the old house is. What did you do with Mac? How long are you going to stay? Tell all my friends out there—our friends—that I'm well, and glad I'm where I am, but wish I didn't have to be here.

"SON."

. . . . . .

"DEAREST MOTHER,—If I had had time to write you on Friday when we struck camp, or on Saturday, you would have received one of the most terrible, bloodthirsty, tired, dirty, disgusted, busted letters imaginable. It rained the last two days of the trip—a slow, cold, constant drizzle. We arrived about four P.M., Thursday, after innumerable stops and delays. It was worse than a milk-train on the D. L. & W. between Richfield and Utica. We were half starved on the last end of the trip, and filthy dirty, not being able to change our clothes or get a good bath. Then we all slept that night on the trains standing on the side-track, and you can imagine the conditions around the cars next morning.

"We detrained after breakfast in the rain, and walked about four miles—the longest possible way around, of course, when we might have reached our barracks in ten minutes directly across a field from the train with our heavy marching equipment and fifty-pound blanket rolls. It is a hilly country, and the soil is soft red clay similar to that of Delaware County. The mud was a foot deep in most places, and we slipped and slid around in it, getting everything covered with wet, red mud. We finally reached our shack, tired and worn out and hungry.

"About fifty feet back of the shack is a forest. In making our 'street' all the trees had to be cut down, and all the stumps and roots pulled out. On Friday when we reached here we started right in to clean out the woods. We are located on a hill, and the floor of each tent had to be leveled by digging the mud from one side and throwing it on the other. Then ditches had to be dug on both sides of the street and behind the tents, and embankments and intrenchments made all around the tents. Then electric-light poles were raised, the tents pitched, and everything 'lined up' both ways. That's the way the Army does things—straight lines, and everything sys-

tematic and according to Hoyle. It's good for a careless chap to have to do things *right.*

"I was on baggage detail Friday and Saturday. I worked until late Friday night. We loaded the mule-wagons and motor-trucks from the freight-car, then rode over to camp on top of the load and threw the stuff off. And, believe me, the ride on the trucks was an education in itself, and developed all the stuff in a man. The road was terrible. Perhaps you can imagine—if your imagination is unusually good—what an impression a heavy U. S. Army motor-truck, loaded to full capacity and then some, might make on a new soft clay road. There were ruts a foot deep, holes two or three feet deep, pools and puddles, washouts and ditches. Cars became stuck everywhere and had to be dug out; they skidded into ditches, fell into washouts, wheels spun helplessly around, and trucks slid backward down hills they were unable to climb. Only the mule-trains plugged steadily along, stopping only while roads were blocked with disabled cars. The truck-drivers, in their efforts to get across without being stranded, pushed the cars with all the speed they dared, not stopping for anything—bumps and all. The baggage-men on top of the load had a job

to hold on that was worth their necks. Several times I caught myself in the air several feet from the truck, only getting back by luck and supreme effort. One man was thrown off into the mud, and is now busy doing time in the hospital. Every one took a hand in pushing and digging.

"After the floors in the tents were leveled off, and a road constructed in the company street, and ditches made, the artistic sense of the boys was aroused, and the result was arched doorways, moss-covered 'lawns' in front of the tents, small trees set out in 'front yards,' rustic bridges over the ditches, and true engineering feats in the construction of bridges across a little stream which crossed the path to the showers and latrines. . . . Oh yes, we have shower-baths—dandy ones. There are ten sprays for each company in a building at the end of the street, 'way back in the woods. The only thing is that the water is cold—very, very cold. Even colder than our mountain Lake on Arbor Day. The only time it doesn't seem like ice is in the morning, when the air is so darn much colder that the water feels lukewarm.

"When we had just about decided that we were in for a winter of drizzly weather and were wondering where in thunder poets

got their inspiration about the 'Sunny South' and all that bunk, Sunday morning dawned bright and fair, and we were awakened by sunbeams dancing in the tent. It was welcome indeed, and tents were furled and the ground given a chance to dry out. Work didn't let up at all Sunday, and everybody was busy pulling stumps and cleaning up.

"The woods are full of insects and animals. One man was bitten by a copperhead snake. Others were poisoned by some sort of herb or root and are suffering terribly. Big lizards, which closely resemble tiny alligators, immense spiders, turtles, and locusts, are often found.

"The weather, or climate, here is very peculiar. It isn't well-regulated at all. The days are hot, but the nights—oh, my! I should think a little of the daytime heat might be spread around at night. 'The Southern moon,' however, is all it is cracked up to be. Last night was nearly as light as day. But, oh, suffering cats! moonbeams shed no heat.

"We went on guard yesterday (Sunday). Last night the job was particularly interesting because there was a lunatic loose in the woods through which my post extended.

It was the easiest thing in the world to stay awake. He was found at half-past five this morning.

"We have electric lights in the mess-shack, and in a little while will have them in the tents, and wooden floors as well. Oh, this isn't bad at all. The air is particularly fine and appetites are always keen.

"I am so glad you are with old friends and having a good time. Give my love to all of them. Write to me soon and often. I feel dreadfully far away, and for pity's sake, keep well.

"SON."

. . . . . .

"Oh, Gee whiz! You *darling* mother. Did I *ask* for all those things? I certainly didn't realize I was asking for enough to cost a dollar's worth of postage. You certainly sent more than I asked for. You always do—always have. (But I never realized it until I got here.)

"I have everything I could possibly need now, and the white socks are so comfortable; I've been having trouble with my feet. Mother, I do appreciate it and I thank you a *world* of thanks. That was a *wonderful* box, Muddy, and every time I change my socks, or wash, or take a picture, I'll think

of you. Gee! Muddy, you're a *peach*. Tell Mrs. M—— I am tickled to death with the box of candy, and I shall write her, too. How good our friends are to me, Muddy!

"Maybe I don't feel well equipped. Gee! I've got everything. It's a great feeling. I'm going to be much more comfortable now in every way. And, Mother, it's a wonderful thing to us fellows here to know there are those at home thinking of us, and doing for us, and really caring about us, individually.

"I play my banjorine a lot. There are some mighty nice fellows here. One is a marvel on a banjo or guitar; another plays the violin, and another the mandolin. I'm some boy myself, and we four go all over the camp. Last night we went over to another regiment and played, and to-morrow we're invited by another outfit to a banquet.

"Well—there's still another letter to be written to-night, and then I must turn in. Mother, isn't she a wonderful girl?

"SON."

. . . . . .

"MUDDY DEAR,—Here's where *you* have to be a soldier, too. The rumor is that we're to be sent abroad sooner than was expected. Of course it's only a rumor, but we've got to

expect it—and get ready for it. Don't you worry. The thing won't last long after *we* get there, and the chances are about 200 to 1 on our coming back whole and with an awful appetite. Honestly, Mom, I was never so healthy in my life. My chest is getting broad, my arms like Samson's, and my eyes are a heap better. I'm feeling great. My feet are all that trouble me, and they are better now.

"All day to-day the whole regiment has been digging trenches, with first, second, and third-line communication trenches, dugouts, listening posts, 'No-Man's Land,' and everything. Soon we're to have a sham battle and be in the trenches for 24 hours.

"Keep well. Have a good time, and remember that Somebody loves you. (I've learned that it's a mighty fine thing to remember, myself.)

"SON."

. . . . . .

There was a dinner-party the night after I got that last letter, and as the dinner was in my honor it was pretty necessary that I go. I do not know what we had to eat. I hardly know who was there, except that there were the faces of old friends and they were kindly and I was glad I was with them.

I felt warm, and cared for, and as if they were trying to keep some kind of blow from me. I know I talked and laughed and sat —for hours. And I kept thinking of one time when we were all youngsters—this same crowd—and had a masquerade-party, and how, just as the guests began to arrive, all in grotesque costumes and grimy masks, the news came to me that one of our number, one to whom my girlish heart had warmly turned—had suddenly been stricken with death. I wore my mask—a foolish, simpering face it was—and danced and played, but behind the mask my face was drawn and miserable, while underneath the music and over the sound of dancing feet, and through the murmur of voices, I kept hearing the message over and over: "Walter is dead. Walter is dead." And how it turned out that when we took off our masks—*every* face was drawn and miserable, for each had heard and each was trying to keep it from the others.

All the time, during this dinner, I wondered how many were wearing masks.

Well, let us hope we shall not be less of soldiers than are the boys whom we have borne and sent forth. . . .

. . . . . .

Camp ——.

"DEAREST MOTHER,—I guess that rumor was mostly bluff. I don't believe we'll be sent across until after Christmas, anyway.

"A box came from Jimsy-Girl to-day. Gee! you don't know how good those things are for a chap who lives on the same old stuff day after day; how much happier and contented they make him feel. It reminds a fellow there's some one at home who loves him.

"I haven't thanked you for the muffler yet, Momsy. And Jimsy sent me a helmet and Suze a sweater. Gee! but they come in handy down here in the 'Sunny South.'

"It's a cold, rainy day outside—that's why we're not out there drilling. But we have our tent stoves up and it's warm and comfortable in here. That is, comparatively speaking. Of course it's not like home, but I'm so hardened to this life that I've forgotten how nice home is—pretty near. When I get warm and have a full stomach I feel like a millionaire. Maybe I won't appreciate home some day! How long are you to be away, Muddy? Tell me the dates when you'll be where you are so I can think in my mind just where you are. All my life, you see, I've been able to put my

finger on you at any moment, and it makes me sort of panicky now not to know just where you are—same as when I was a little boy and got lost from you. And keep well.

"Always your loving

"SON."

. . . . . .

This letter has settled one problem for me, anyway. Back there, at home, I am living in a house three sizes too large for one lone woman. It has seemed foolish to retain it, with him away indefinitely, but now I certainly shall. If he feels "panicky" not to be able to visualize his mother in some one definite place while she is traveling about, how much more necessary that he be able to see her—when he goes abroad to strange lands—in the familiar surroundings of his boyhood! His home shall remain the same, and he may think of his sticks and bats and racquets as in the same old corner of the hall. It may be more work and more expense, and more lonely, but it is the background he needs.

. . . . . .

We seem to be sort of disembodied spirits now—all we fathers and mothers and wives and sweethearts. Our hands and our feet go about their accustomed tasks and ways,

but our hearts continually hover over those yellow tents where our beloved sleep and eat and play and work — that grim and sinister work. . . .

. . . . . .

From Her:

"DEAR MUDDY,—(I'm *so* glad you let me, too, call you 'Muddy.' It seems to bring Boy and me nearer.)

"Oh, Muddy, do you think I'll make a good wife? Sometimes I get horribly scared —not just about being a wife, but *all of it.* I want to be a good housekeeper, too, and a good mother. I want to make a real *home*—the kind everybody loves—warm and pretty and sweet and flowery and *used.* Do you suppose I can do that?

"I am making things for that home, Muddy, not very many now, though, for I'm knitting socks for Boy, and sweaters for other soldiers, and sewing at the Red Cross. What busy, busy days these are! And do you know, it seems as if we all feel different. Closer, somehow, and warmer-hearted.

"YOUR JIMSY-GIRL—AND HIS."

There is a lot in that. *Closer, somehow, and warmer-hearted.* Cliques and classes are being

melted in the great firing-pot of sacrifice. We meet and talk together on the street—position, "standing," clothing, money, all forgotten in the great and absorbing fact that "your boy and mine are together, Over There."

. . . . . .

Sometimes, it appears, there is an exception to the rule. I went to call, this afternoon, on an old-time acquaintance. I found her absorbed in the purchase of a new home and land. After I had been shown over the house, exclaiming properly at the improvements, made and anticipated, taken to the door and shown many fine acres that lay to the rear, we sat down to "visit." She was hemming some towels—I had my knitting.

"I suppose you're interested in the Red Cross work," I ventured, confidently. Everybody else was, and in their small town they had a remarkably fine organization.

"No." I lifted shocked eyes at the harsh and nasal inflection of the word. "I'm not. If I believed there was any *necessity* for all this sewing and knitting"—still that high, creaking tone—"I'd be willing to work my fingers off. But when I hear about all the graft there is in it—"

"Now, Ellen"—I couldn't wait a decent

time to throw myself into the fray—"you aren't going to tell me that old sweater story, are you?"

It was her turn to lift surprised eyes.

"Why, yes. I *was* going to speak about a case I heard of, where a woman knit a sweater for the Red Cross and *marked the pocket*, and later she saw that selfsame sweater on a man; and she asked him where he got it, and he said he bought it of a woman for two dollars. Now, if some of them Red Cross women didn't *sell* it, how did he—"

I groaned—I couldn't help it.

"Ellen"—I dropped my knitting and leaned forward—"I've heard that sweater story all the way from the Atlantic coast here. It's a stock story being handed around by those who don't want to do anything, just as an excuse. It's propaganda."

"How do you know it is?" This with a disagreeable snarl. She did not want her story spoiled, didn't want to lose her pitiful excuse.

"Because, if this story were true, and it was any evidence of similar 'graft' to make it an excuse for reliable people to discontinue the Red Cross work, there would be many more of them. Even supposing there

had been such an instance—one, or a dozen —would that be any reason for refusing our aid to an organization that is doing such incalculable good as this?"

The argument seemed good to me, and I warmed to it, silencing her, at least on this score. She had another one ready, however.

"Well"—the argumentative tone of a woman who talks through her nose can put a lot of aggravation into this one word— "do you approve of sending *tobacco and cigarettes* to the boys?"

"I do. I think there's a lot of tobacco propaganda abroad, too—sent out by tobacco interests, but, nevertheless, I approve of sending it. In the kind of life they're living tobacco won't hurt them, not nearly so much as the same amount would do if they were hanging around saloons or drug-stores or clubs or even street-corners. They're kept so busy most of the time that they don't have much time to smoke, and when they do, let 'em smoke. God knows they have few enough comforts."

By the set of her thin lips I knew this argument had not gone far.

"Well"—(that "well" again)—"they won't get any of *my* money to help make a bad

matter worse, that's certain." I made up my mind that they wouldn't get any of her money, anyway, nor any of her help in any other way, and I couldn't stand any more of her. She said she hoped I was going to make her a longer visit than *that*—to eat at least *one* meal in her house, but I didn't want any of her meals and I left.

. . . . . .

The Liberty Loan drive was on at the same time, and on the same day that this incident occurred I heard a similar argument. Only, this time, it was a man.

"No," said he, "I can't buy any Liberty Bonds. If I had plenty of money, why, I'd buy one, but I 'ain't. And, anyway, I think we're doing our share when we take extra land to work and dig in the way we've done this year. Why, we planted ten acres of beans, and five acres of onions," and so on and on.

"But didn't you do that quite as much because you knew these things would bring a good price as with any desire to help?"

"Well, it *does* help, and I can't do no more. There wa'n't no sense in getting into this war, nohow."

That very afternoon this man and the husband of the woman who was skeptical

of the Red Cross went to town together and bought, each of them, forty acres more of land.

Such instances are so few and far between, however, and the eagerness to help so universal and enthusiastic, that they may be discounted at once and forgotten, even though it makes you mad as a hatter at the time.

. . . . . .

Nobody can accuse the sewing-circles of talking gossip now. Everybody talks about the war, just as everybody knits. Once, at all these luncheons and tea-parties where we gather, we would have played cards and talked about tatting and cross-stitch, even if we let the neighbors alone. Now, however, cards are seldom mentioned, but sweaters and mufflers and socks grow under our fingers, and we talk about the war . . . always about the war. The private affairs of the neighbors don't seem so interesting as they used to be.

Sometimes, especially after a bad night when the kind forgetfulness of sleep has been denied me, I can hardly bear the talk. Sometimes—when the stories of the atrocities get particularly fearful—I make an excuse to leave the room. Last night was such a

time. Voices rose, each pitched a little higher than the other, because nobody wants ever to hear the other fellow's argument, only impatient to make known his own.

I have sustained myself through darkest hours by an optimism which may be foolish, but which surely is more strengthening than the waves of calamitous prophecy which sometimes sweep through press and assembly. I do not fail to recognize the terrible seriousness of the situation; I do not minimize the danger and the need of sustained effort. I do not delude myself with the thought that our boys will "get good training out of this and little else." I am dismayed, appalled, and sick with realization of all that it means and may mean, but I cannot live and work if I dwell too much on the horrors, the apprehensions, the detailed accounts of all the terrible things that have come and will yet more come to pass. When I do I visualize my own son and all these dear, clean young boys who went out with him, and I cannot sleep or eat or think.

That other time, when the Gray Wolf tore at our hearts, I found the same thing true. When I dwelt upon my loss, my grief, his possible fear and loneliness (if he still *was*),

I could not go sanely about the tasks that were still left for me to do. I could not roam a "No-Man's Land" between an unknown heaven and a desolate earth, searching for him who, after all, might not be there, but sheltered somewhere nearer than I knew—and keep the sanity needed for the *business in hand.*

So I had to put him away, since I could not, then, think of him serenely as *placed,* content, and safe. I had to compel myself to take up the immediate affairs of my life and shut that other out.

So now I cannot live in the dreadfulness of the war and do the work that is mine to do; and when argument and discussion begin to wear upon nerves already frayed and edged, I go out into the open. City streets, however, do not bring the relief or courage that my woods and fields and hills do, although at such moments I forget all fear of human molestation, no matter what the hour.

VII

NOT "HOW LONG?" BUT "HOW WELL?"

ONE Sunday I went to visit a cantonment where was stationed the son of one of my dearest friends. The day was rainy and we could not drive. The train was an hour late, and while we waited for it the mother sat with strained and anxious face, begrudging every moment that kept her away from her boy. The father, after the way of men, walked the floor.

When, finally, we pulled out, every seat was crowded, with mothers and fathers, sisters, wives, sweethearts, friends. And in their hands and at their feet were baskets and boxes, parcels and packages; treats tenderly prepared by loving hands.

I was delayed a moment in getting off the train, and when I did reach the station platform, there they were already with their arms around him, and his around them—

parents and son, a ruddy youth, brimming with delight and affection. Too intent were they upon this reunion to note what I saw at first glance—three stripes of a hue darker than the regulation khaki of his sleeve. In the hotel to which we went the mother's eyes, roving proudly over her stalwart son, first noticed the insignia.

"What are those stripes for, Eddie?"

"Sergeant"—this with careful inflection of modesty—"I wanted to surprise you." And surprised they were. And proud. For a moment I felt like an outsider; then I remembered that he was *my* sergeant as well as theirs!

The hotel (officers' headquarters and rendezvous for the soldiers and their friends) was filled with soldiers—soldiers everywhere, with their wives, their parents, their sisters, and their sweethearts. Old parents leaning proudly and wistfully upon the arm of a tall young officer. A little sister clinging to the fingers of a towering youth in uniform, with the smaller brother marching sturdily and pridefully at his side. Young girls looking with adoring eyes into browned faces, a fearful thought clutching at the heart. Everywhere against the background of rich red velvets, marble statuary, glistening wood,

was the brown of khaki, the dominance of military suggestion. It was a wonderful—an awfully beautiful scene. On a wall near where our party sat was a painting of sheep—sheep huddled together before a storm.

Later, after a dinner in which we all tried to be gay, we drove out to the cantonment. Never have I seen another such road. The men who traveled that road daily must have found an old acquaintance in Flanders. Ruts, hub-deep, torn and cut and upheaved by ruthless traffic of the war-machine. Never did I see such a continuous procession of cars, going out and coming back. Never did I feel more penetrating, chilling wind and rain. Never did I witness a bleaker scene than those great muddy acres strewn with barracks—great, barn-like structures. Warm they are, and comfortable indeed as compared with the rawness, bleakness, and mud outside, but they made me think of pens *with huddled things inside.*

Outside the men were lining up for roll-call. Rows upon rows of them everywhere, tall, straight, alert. Voices ringing out, quick and true—"Here!"

In my mind's eye *I saw a battle-field abroad, sodden and scarred, and lines upon*

lines of men drawn up again for roll-call. But the lines were thinned; some of the men wore reddened bandages, and, after the call of some of the names—a silence. . . .

When we boarded our crowded train at night to go back home the boys ran along the platform outside, loath to let their loved ones go, eyes seeking eyes, hands outstretched, souls clinging, *lips smiling.* Then we to our comfortable, lonely homes. They back through the rain and mud and ruts to those great barn-like structures where they would huddle together for a little, gay and brave of heart, bemoaning no fate, and then, sleep and forgetfulness of partings and of the future.

As we rode away through the dark and rain I wished *my* soldier-boy were not so far away that I could not see him often, even though the heart would be torn afresh each time.

The next day was pleasant and we drove through the country. Upon the hills were row upon row of scarlet and crimson and golden trees. It was like a great pageant of color, marching, marching. You could almost hear the shouting of triumphant voices. But at the ridge, against the sky, were the bare spears of leafless branches, like

bayonets of advancing troops coming over the top to lay these flaunting banners low.

We passed a flock of sheep being driven to the shambles. They went along orderly enough, even frisking a little by the way. Never rebelling, hardly bleating—except the young ones. These the shepherd and the dogs soon brought into line. We drove on for many pleasant miles, but I could not get the thought of the sheep out of my mind. I kept seeing their white wool all torn and splotched.

When we came back the same way a company of soldiers was being marched to their train through the streets where the sheep had been. They moved in an orderly manner, some laughing a little, and flirting by the way. A few—the more boyish faces —were a bit colorless. Their lips and youthful chins were firmly set, but there was a look in the eyes that brought back that picture on the wall, and the sheep huddling along the road.

. . . . . .

In all his letters to me there has been no hint of homesickness, until to-day:

"Oh, Muddy, I *hope* you are having a good time and that you never get as lonely and homesick as I do."

This tore my heart. For a little while I wished he might never think of home—that he might forget it entirely in absorption of new duties, new interests, new pleasures, if they were good. The second thought would not admit this wish. I have been homesick many times in my life. Twice it made me physically ill. But each time my love of home, my reverence for homes, and my earnest desire to be worthy of a home and to make the best, has been strengthened and fortified. These boys of ours accepted their homes as they did their breath. When they come home their capacity for appreciation will be developed and intensified. They will recognize the value of a home and help to make better ones than they might ever have done otherwise. They are now fighting for homes, and they could not fight if they did not first love.

When he was little, and sick, I shut my eyes to the discomforts of bad medicine or confinement, looking to results. Now I must do the same. These hard lessons of discomfort, confinement, restriction, discipline, will make better men.

Talking about this "training and development" is another sort of "whistling to keep the courage up." When we—mothers and

fathers—are particularly torn with apprehension, anxiety, and solicitude, immediately we begin to talk about the benefits of "training." Two mothers will sit together looking into each other's faces with those tragic eyes that do not lie, and bravely tell each other how sure they are this training is going to benefit their sons. And their words are true. We *know* that our boys are already more rugged, better able to withstand, insured against disease. We believe that the discipline will teach them greater self-control than ever they could have been taught in homes or colleges. We believe all that we say—but we say it most when we are most torn with dread.

. . . . . .

I am visiting in the city. Sousa's band was parading the streets to-day in the interest of the Y. M. C. A. drive. I am always thrilled by the vibrations from a band, always moved by the sight of uniformed feet moving to rhythmical measure.

To-day, as the gallant old music-master marched past, as the volume of sound beat upon the air and the khaki-clad forms went swinging by, rank on rank of them, I could not see them for the blur upon my eyes; I could not hear for the ringing in my ears.

And all at once my blood grew hot and surged, and my fingers clenched, *and I swore.* I was mad, clean, fighting mad, to think that men like these, young, straight, clean, home-loving, peace-loving, men should have to go out there into that raging, hellish, killing fire, to expose their fine young bodies to the devil's guns, to face and gasp and *die* because a greedy hand wanted to rule the world. And I said, "God, *damn war!*"

. . . . . .

Where others show signs of weakness I am at my strongest. If there was always some one to be upheld, perhaps I might always be at my best.

The other day an old woman who does day work was talking to me about the war and the drafting of men.

"Of course," she was saying, "maybe they won't take my boy. He's the right age, but he ain't very well. He's been sickly 'most all his life. I said to him last night, 'Well, Jimmie,' I said, 'of course, if they take you we can't help it, but I'd rather bury you than see you go.' And I would. Yes, I'd rather bury him than see him go to war. He's a boy that 'ain't never known what hardship is. He's been humored and pampered all his life. Why, he never did

a whole day's work in his life till last fall, and he's twenty-one. He's never been very well and so I've humored him. And now I'd rather bury him than see him go to war."

The chances are that she will have opportunity to bury Jimmie before he is chosen for army material. Sounds tragically ridiculous, doesn't it—her argument? The infinite pathos of it! Such a mother! She has humored and pampered and helped to deteriorate an already weak and ineffectual body, until now it is practically useless to himself and to the world. She loves it, of course, and in a futile way he probably enjoys living; or at least he is sufficiently satisfied with life to prefer a monotonous and weakling existence to adventure in the service of mankind. But what is there to be gained by such a life? Whom does it benefit? What justifies it? Of course, the individual in question would doubtless argue that, being brought, unchallenged and unsolicited, into the world, he has a right to live his life. And so he has, perhaps, but, dependent upon that world for food and drink and clothing, to say nothing of education, pleasure, and safety—particularly safety—does he owe nothing in return? The "world" is made up, so far as the present

argument is concerned, of individual human beings, each, in the main, doing his part for the protection, benefit, and betterment of that world. There are teachers to educate, doctors to heal, builders of shelters, forces of protection, all working at last for the safety and advantage of the individual. How can one dare to live and accept, and not do his share? What sort of a man or woman is it who, with any trace of self-respect, can hide behind the strong arm of some other member of society who is playing the game squarely?

Not many mothers will take the attitude of this poor old soul who would rather bury her son than see him march off to war. But how many mothers do "pamper and humor" their sons until they are unfit for any satisfaction to themselves—to say nothing of service to humanity? For a man cannot be quite satisfied with himself unless he stands well in the eyes of his community, and communities have small use in peace or war for the selfish, narrow-spirited man or woman. I do not believe in treating boys as I have seen some boys treated—given any old room or corner of the house which could not be put to any other use, with any old furniture that can find no place else-

where, obliged to work from dawn to dark with no regular or recognized compensation, and only a very occasional "day off"; no good clothes, no form of recreation. Boys treated in this manner are justified in leaving home; but not many boys receive such treatment in these days. Youth is better understood, individual rights are better recognized, and, even where no higher motive prevails, knowledge that children are no longer chattels, and that they will break loose and rebel, compels better treatment. But, on the other hand, "pampering" of the boy—or the girl, either; the same argument applies to both—leads to selfishness and weakness. The "mother love" which shields a child from all hardship, all sacrifice, is a poor, bogus thing, at best an extremely selfish form of love, inconsiderate of the child's welfare as an individual. We are justified in keeping our children as far from danger to life and limb as possible, but to keep them too ignorant of danger is to make them helpless in the face of it. It is instinctive with the mother to protect her offspring from hardship, to go without even the necessities of life in order to provide him with comfort. And yet, this is a weakness. The man or woman who is not prepared to

meet hardship and privation courageously, and to cope with danger intelligently, is unfitted to tackle life in a world where danger is imminent and privation is next-door neighbor.

We mothers do dread the hardships, the long marches, the exhausting drills, the comfortless beds, the inconveniences and homesickness which our boys are to meet with in the experience coming to them. They are still "children" to us, the kiddies we would like to protect and shield. In reality they are *men going out to do a man's work*, and they are glad of it. They will meet every experience bravely, measure up to it and grow with it. Of course they are going into danger, but the chances are that they will come out of it alive and safe and sound, with a broadened and deepened nature and an experience which they would not part with for worlds. The larger percentage of the men who go into battle come out of it alive and well. Of course there are exceptions . . . one cannot forget Balaklava and "The Charge of the Light Brigade." One remembers the descriptions of some of the terrible things in the present war. But peace has its perils for the individual, too —imagine getting grim comfort from the

thought of the railroad wrecks, earthquakes, floods, and fires where tremendous casualties have occurred; just because they were not war. Men, thousands of them, do come back unscathed from the bloodiest wars.

We must send our boys to the front with brave and hopeful hearts, believing they will return to us stronger and better men for the going. After all, for all of us *it is not a matter of how long can you live, but how well?*

. . . . . .

The other day I was talking with a woman whose son is exempt from draft because of physical disability. The same disability will make it impossible for him ever to take any very active part in life. He cannot play games or run or tramp or do any very hard work. He is uncomfortable and unhappy a good deal of the time. He will never enjoy a satisfactory married life. He cannot play a man's part. Yet, he is "safe" from going to war and his mother is happy over it. For a few minutes I envied her—her son is riding about town in his automobile, wearing no uniform that signifies danger, while my son is taking the training that is to fit him for battle. For a very few minutes—not more than two—I almost wished that my son were not quite so lusty a youth.

Contempt of so unworthy a wish, however, immediately drove the whimpering thought away, and I was glad that he is strong and full of the fire of youth, glad that his courage and free, fine spirit have led him into the great conflict for right. If he comes back whole, as we hope and pray he will, he will take his place in the world with a man's vigor, and play the game as he could never have done if he were a weakling in spirit or in flesh. If he does not come back—or if he comes back wounded or dismembered . . . well, after all, it is not "how safely and how long can you live," but "how well can you live while you are here?"

. . . . . .

Fine and gay—oh, fine and gay, are the preachments I can make when the sun shines and the papers tell us the Allies are making a successful drive. But—yesterday, when news came of the sinking of a troop-ship, I was a poor, pallid, whimpering thing, aghast with dismay and yet quivering with an anger which would like to have been at the throats of their murderers. Their faces haunted me—floating for a moment with hopeless, pleading eyes, upon the crest of a wave—then gone. The faces of mothers

haunted me. The cries I heard in the dark deafened me:

"*No fighting chance! No fighting chance!*"

Of course, no one knew of this prostrate condition (I went to a club luncheon and made a fine and courageous speech), but, nevertheless, I lay awake the entire night fashioning infamous plans whereby I could accomplish at least *one* soldier's release. I think I may give myself the benefit of a doubt whether, snaked out of bed by an angry and avenging government and given the opportunity to carry out any of those unworthy aims, even the weak nature would have triumphed over a saner mood. The fact remains, however, that sleepless hours witness many an ignominious struggle and defeat.

. . . . . .

Next night we went to hear Harry Lauder, and I was so privileged as to sit upon the stage where he sang. Under ordinary circumstances, I fancy, I should not have cared much for his mimicry and buffoonery, even if charmed by the easy, rolling voice. But as I sat there and watched his grinning, grimacing countenance and listened to the soft burring of his tones, I thought of another night, when a messenger had handed

him the telegram that blanched all the color from his face, turned the ruddy blood to water in his veins, and changed all the current of his life—the message that told him of the death in battle of his only son, the light and purpose of his life. I wondered what—what—others—of us would be doing—when such messages came—to us! And to what use the poor remnants of our lives would be put.

. . . . . .

A story was told to-day that amused and moved me. A certain young man, of a small town near here, now a soldier, who has always been especially considerate of old people and companionable to little children, one day last summer was driving along in his car and overtook a small boy about six years of age. He stopped, took the youngster in, and engaged in a man-to-man conversation, which, of course, pleased the youngster mightily. Later in the afternoon, while the family was at supper, the kiddie appeared at that young man's house and asked for Billy. Billy went to the door, to receive an invitation to play on a baseball team that was being organized of youngsters the size of his visitor! Of course Billy did not refuse.

That night, when the little boy was preparing to retire, he said, "Mother, there's only three people in this town I care anything about."

His mother was considerably surprised, since the child was a universal favorite.

"Why, is that so, dearie? Who are they?"

"Santa Claus and Jesus Christ and Billy Allen."

It is with a swelling heart I tell this story, for that is the kind of boys we are sending "Over There."

. . . . . .

If I tell the story above with tender emphasis and a swelling heart, how shall I react to what I read in the daily paper about the training our boys are getting in the use of the tools of the deadly trade to which they are now apprenticed? I have before me, as I write, a clipping describing in detail the bayonet drill at one of the Western camps—"Teaching Them to Growl" is the caption over it. Of course one knew well enough that the business of killing is a thing of frightful detail; but the imagination sickens at the vision of it as set forth in words. This is the thing into which Autocracy has plunged the world. What a Reconstruction

of all civilization there must be to pay for such an expenditure of the best we have!

. . . . . .

Teaching them to growl. To be like beasts and brutes. Youths like Billy Allen and Jack Daley and Boy. Youths and men who have been taught to be kindly and courteous and considerate and gentle. Boys whose lips have spoken only friendly, human words. Using "terrible language" to roil their ugliest natures, to stir that sleeping remnant of the savage which generations of civilization have been laboring to obliterate. Teaching them, *teaching them*—to do unspeakable, unthinkable things to fellowmen.

I suppose that, without such exhortation, these honest, wholesome, decent lads could hardly bring themselves to pierce even the effigy of a man with the deadly bayonet. And such things must be—in a Christian land! The brain reels, the spirit faints. This, then, is what the German militarism has dragged us into!

God must damn war!

VIII

GOD IS NOT DEAD!

AN empty, echoing house, save for the welcome of a faithful collie-dog who throws himself upon me in a whining, yelping ecstasy of joy. . . . The least said about this empty house the better. . . .

The first snowfall, and no shouting, stamping, ruddy-faced boy announcing his delight in this ever-welcome return of an old friend and playmate. No excited inquiries: "Mother, where's my toque?" "Are my skees in the storeroom, Mother?" No gleeful, "Coasting to-night, Mom?" No well-known tremors of apprehension over the yearly: "There'll be skating on the Lake Saturday, Mother. The ice in the bay is almost thick enough now."

. . . . . .

I have been going over his clothes for the winter, packing, airing them, folding them,

putting them away. I love to handle them and it makes me ill. I was invited to a friendly home to dinner, and they little knew how glad I was to come—to leave this haunted house—to creep into the warm shelter of companionship.

There is always the coming home again, though—and I am glad, lonely though it is. There is his picture smiling out of the dusk at me as I turn on the lights; the picture in the parlor—the smiling one which was his glad surprise for me a year ago last Christmas; there is that other picture on the mantel in the library, the one of his baby face snuggled trustingly against that of his older brother—the brother who was called so long ago, but who, I have come of late to feel, has been not far away. In my bedroom are other pictures! the one in which he looks like a small pugilist with doubled fist and scowling face; the one in his choir robes—none of Raphael's cherubs bore more angelic aspect; the one with the proud and serious face looking solemnly out from under a Boy Scout campaign hat; and that other taken so lately—in a soldier's uniform—that hangs close beside my pillow.

There are his skates hanging on the hall-tree—I brought them out and hung them

there with his old warm mackinaw and his cap. There are his books, his playthings. And there is the pictured face of *her*, so sweet and serious, waiting, as I am waiting, for the return of the dearest boy on earth. Aye, coming home is good; though the heart is wrung, it is also comforted.

. . . . . .

"DEAREST MUDDY,—This is Thanksgiving Day. It isn't like the one we had last year, is it? 'Member the turkey and how I spilled the gravy when I carved the bird? We had lots to be thankful for then, hadn't we?

"No, I'm not going to write a homesick letter; but I wonder what you're doing, right now. It's morning yet, not cold—although my fingers tingle from washing them in freezing water. The door is open and we have no fire in the stove. I have my sweater on and am not uncomfortable. It's sort of misty and gray, like some of the days at home where a fog hangs over the hills and the Lake.

"I am glad you are invited out. I'm glad nobody's going to eat at our table. We are to have a big feed—turkey and all the fixin's. 'Member how, last Thanksgiving, we kids went skating after dinner, and to the Club

dance at night? Oh, heck! Mud, I can't write any more. I get to 'membering—and —well, I guess I'll go out and jab a few bayonets into one of those dummies.

"A Good Boy Loves His Mother.

"P.S.—Later in the day

"We've had our feed, and as we're too full to do anything else, I'm going to top off my letter with something a little more cheerful—maybe.

"We have much to be thankful for yet, and it occurred to me, as I lay awake this morning—having crawled back in after getting up for reveille—that probably the greatest thing I had to be thankful for was that I haven't shirked being where duty and honor have called me.

"It has rained this morning and it's a damp, dark day. But it is not cold. We have no fire and the door is wide open. I am sitting here with a sweater on, and the only place I am cold is my finger-tips where I just washed in the freezing water at the bath-house. We have no hot water, and I'd rather have a hot bath than anything I can think of. The fellows put up with a lot because they don't want to complain.

"I'm going to try to tell you in this letter some of the things you want to know. You

asked me once how the fellows feel about the situation. Well, the universal feeling is one of profound disgust at having such a job to do. The whole sentiment of the thing is: 'Oh, hell!' Talk about 'the glory of war!' It's like the apple core—there ain't none.

"Everybody crabs about the grub. Every time we sit down to eat we think of home, and invariably some lobster commences to spring that stuff about 'mother's biscuits,' and 'the coffee we used to have at home,' and things like that, until somebody throws a mess-tin, or something equally hard, at him.

"You ask if I do my own washing. I used to, up North and awhile after I came here, but now I have a colored mammy do it. *She* gets it clean, and it costs little and is much more satisfactory.

"We have six cooks who wear chevrons with a pot under them on their arms. One of them is head cook, and over him is a sergeant who wears three stripes on his arm, stripes with a crescent under them—signifying the commissary. Then there are six men on 'K. P.' (kitchen police) detail. Each man does his trick for six days, a new man coming in daily. They help cook, serve,

chop wood, scrub the pots and pans, draw water, and do all the dirty work. Then the men who answer sick-call and are marked 'light duty' in the sick-book, sweep out the mess-hall and scrub the tables.

"The Y. M. C. A. is doing marvelous things and is truly a noble institution. It helps the soldiers in hundreds of ways: provides amusement, educational classes, keeps stationery and stamps, receives deposits for the banks, takes telegrams— Oh, it is indispensable!

"Our beds are cots. They are very comfortable. Once they were hard, but in our present condition a bed of rocks would be comfortable, and with my blanket, my extra blanket, and overcoat over me, I sleep warm. (And this is the 'Sunny South'!) Also, I have a cheap cotton mattress which I bought in the city for $2, which adds both warmth and comfort. Recently we have been supplied with board floors and wooden walls, and soon we are to have electric lights— most of the tents have them now. With our little tent stoves red hot it is quite 'homey.'

"One part of our training that is particularly pleasant, and calls forth many happy comments (unfit for publication) is the con-

stant drill. Oh, how the fellows love the drills—*not!* The never-ending:

"Squads east, squads west. Left front into line!
And then, the dirty lobsters, they give us double-time.

"It is the close-order drill that gets the goats. The bayonet drills are more interesting, because they appeal to the imagination.

"The physical exercises would be a lot worse if they weren't interspersed with games like 'three deep' and 'tag' and 'leap-frog'—a bunch of things we'd be ashamed to do in civil life.

"Life in the trenches is particularly sweet. Every one does his 24-hour trick in them, and sleeps about one hour. They pack about 30 of us in a little 10 x 20 dugout, and tell us to make ourselves at home. We stand around and slowly freeze to death—no room to lie down—and then we come out and half of us have pneumonia or something worse. Oh, I tell you Fritz has got something coming to him from us for making us go through with all this!

"On Wednesday and Saturday afternoons and evenings we are allowed to go over to town; also Sundays. The first week after

pay-day we go—and we try to see how quickly we can spend all our money on grub and shows and hair-cuts and a lot of stuff that might seem absolutely useless. Of course we get stung and soaked everywhere.

"Sometimes we go around to various other companies and organizations to visit our friends. Sometimes we get together for a little music—in my case, quite often—or a sing. Usually we write letters at night, clean our guns, and turn in. There is never any difficulty in sleeping any old time, we are so darn tired. But we are awake most of the nights along toward morning, trying to get the dash-blanked blanket to stay on the spot where we're coldest.

"For a few days *after* pay-day there are poker and crap games everywhere. It's the principal diversion. Of course, your little son doesn't gamble, but almost everybody else does. Just *before* pay-day the game is pinochle!

"The most favorite pastime of all, however, is telling one another what your opinion of the non-coms is. And it is always the same. A non-com is the lowest form of humanity—hated by the privates, jumped on by the officers, jealous of one another. They get so sick of their jobs after they've

had them for a while that they wish they were dead, and everybody else wishes it, too. So it's unanimous.

"Well, I guess I've told you about 'most everything. We endure a lot of hardships, and we crab about them here, but we hate to have our folks at home know that we kick, for fear they'll think we're yellow.

"However, we're tough as nails and growing brown and sturdy, and we're certainly laying up some spirit to take out on Kaiser Bill when we get at him. I don't suppose it 'll hurt us any in the long run—if we live through it—and we'll certainly have some tales to tell our children, and to swap when we're old. We get horribly homesick and we long for home, but here we are and here we're going to stick till the show's over. And then, oh, *Boy!*

"Taps. Good night, dear Mother.

"SON."

. . . . . .

The days go by. And that is about all you can say for them. Work a-plenty. Early hours and late, and thankful for every rush. Knitting and Red Cross sewing in any spare moment, with an occasional evening at the movies or a game at cards to dispel the ever-lowering clouds of anxiety and appre-

hension. There are few parties and dinners or other social activities such as have always made life in a small and cultured town so great a pleasure. Nobody has the spirit or desire. It would be like playing games at a funeral. Instead, the women who once spent afternoons at bridge are now, day after day, sitting indefatigably before long tables in Red Cross rooms, sewing bandages, picking oakum, making pads. At home they have their knitting. This has been going on every day since war was declared—and before. Through all the summer season, where once gaiety would have been thought supreme, those gay butterflies of society met and mingled with the soberer townspeople in preparation for that calamity which the declaration of war foretold. All summer the white jeweled fingers of women plied the drab wools at dance, concert, and tea. On even the hottest days no woman shirked her turn at the economics kitchen, doing her share to prepare for emergencies. Men took their exercise with hoe and spade rather than with golf-stick and tennis-club, and women also had their war-gardens.

It has been no short-lived enthusiasm. The determination of men and women who could not put on the khaki uniform and

march away to war has been no less serious and steadfast. They are going to see this thing through, whether the call comes from the soil, the kitchen, or the needle. We have been slow in our preparations because we were a trusting nation, happy, loving one another, in honor *preferring* one another; but now that we have seen the Beast staring with molten eyes into the windows of our homes, our lips, like those of the heroes of the Marne, are set in iron firmness: "They shall not pass!"

. . . . . .

"DEAR MUDDY,—I know how you feel about our being married before Boy goes abroad. I have thought it all out a thousand times. Of *course* he 'may come back shattered and broken.' But, Muddy dear, wouldn't it be a greater happiness to me to give my life nursing him back to health—caring for him, working for him—than anything else I could give? If he offers *himself*—and gets beaten, could I do less than to give *myself* to him? And suppose he never did come back. . . . I had to wait a long few minutes before I could write that, but, nevertheless, suppose—even *that*. We would have had a few, few hours, or days, knowing what it would mean to belong to each other

—entirely. And Muddy—that might be our only chance in all this world to—know.

"You say that if I were free—if anything had happened to him—I would be in a position to take other opportunities. Muddy, you forget that—after this horrible war is over there are not going to be so many opportunities for the girls that are left. There have always been more eligible women than men—now even more will be left to live their lives alone.

"I present this argument first, hoping to overcome your own logical reasoning with some of mine. You say I must 'remember the possibilities of even so hasty or short-lived a marriage.' I know what you mean, Muddy, and I do remember. But—Muddy, *suppose this means my only chance?*

"In spite of all you're going through now, Muddy, you don't wish you hadn't ever had him, do you? You're gladder than glad, aren't you? And if . . . You know what I am thinking, don't you? Do you suppose I wouldn't be glad, too?

"Well, when Boy goes over there to face danger and death, I shall be true to him—truer than steel, Muddy, you know that. And he will be true to me. There will never be anything in this world for either of us

unless it's together—and there isn't any other world just like this, no matter what else may come.

"If Boy never came back—and I had his child—and mine, think how much richer my life would be. If it's *me* you are thinking about, and of course it is—look at my viewpoint, Muddy, and don't withhold your consent when he comes home.

"Your sorrowful
JIMSY-GIRL."

. . . . . .

And I shall not withhold it. They *are* too young, but God knows this thing is making them old enough—all of them. Their lives are theirs—whatever may be left of them. I should not dare keep from them any smallest grain of comfort that they may find. It may be unwise—it may be unfair to her, but I fear a greater unwisdom, a greater unfairness.

. . . . . .

I have been greatly struck of late with the number of articles printed in magazines and newspapers, and in the books on Spiritualism, immortality—life after death. I have wondered at the frequency of them, at the hold this subject seems to have taken

upon the public mind. And then it occurred to me—with a suddenness which caught my breath—*we may have been unprepared for war, but we are not going to be unprepared for what war brings.* We must be fortified with some measure of absolute faith, some semblance of knowledge of that Land toward which great hordes are marching. One wonders if heaven will not be overcrowded. One also wonders whether enmity dies with the earthly body.

. . . . . .

If I could let go! If I could let go!

I say to myself: When he went I gave him up, to his country, to his God; and yet, I know I did *not* give him up. I cling to him, I hold him as tenaciously with the spirit as ever in his days of infancy I held him in the flesh. I keep saying, I *must* let go. I must give him up. He is no longer mine. I *say* I have given him up, but in my heart I play the miser. How can I loose my hands and let go my last possession?

I do not, however, ask God to preserve *my* child, forgetting others. Not that I could be so presumptuous as to expect a grieved and outraged God to hear or heed one small petition in the midst of such a clamor as has been borne on sulphurous air

to His ears, but because, even unheard, I should blush to crave the boon.

Once I tried—the night after the news of the sinking of that transport. It was long past midnight, a desperate hour and no time for "Thees" and "Thous." So driven and stormed was the soul that it went *at* God, not *to* Him. Something like this:

"See here, God"—then a choking that was like to strangle. "Now look here, God. I know there are mothers all over the world—lying awake—trying to get Your ear—mothers in France, in England, in Russia, yes, and—and Germany—who are suffering—more than I—*ten times* more than I—their sons in immediate danger already—gone. And probably there are other mothers who—like me—haven't another soul on earth—but I—*I*—oh, well, oh—well, I can't ask it. I—won't ask it."

And so . . . the prayer trailed out—not even asking for the safety of many—until "all's right with the world."

. . . . . .

GOD IS NOT DEAD! Nor deaf—nor turned away—a shocked and grieving face—from this red earth His hands created in its freshness. I hear Him in the rush of words—like garments whispering in the morning

wind—which urge and drive a spendthrift nation toward a careful husbandry. I hear Him in the tread of marching feet, the snap of steel, the rustling—like the leaves of corn in autumn breeze—of khaki clothes. I hear Him voicing—through the roll of drums—a call to arms—a deep and mighty plea that grips the heart of man and moves him from his ease.

A God of Mars—not shouting from afar, but *part of every man*, and *every man a part of Him*. God militant. God chivalrous. The King of Swords.

I see Him in the eyes of grieving motherhood. The heart of Mary, pierced with Calvary's nails, was, as in all anguished motherhood, the home of God. *He* grieves, through her, when child of His goes forth to war! I sometimes hear Him sobbing in the night, and, once, when a long train of warrior youths moved slowly and painfully from out our midst, I felt Him there—touching their hands, moving among them—sick at the heart because they must; yet, one with the voice of divine, creative parenthood, bidding them go.

God pitiful. Compassionate. Of sorrows, King.

On every battle-field God dies a thousand

deaths. The soldier's gasp His moan. Their blood is that which spilled on Calvary. The Cross was not the end of pain. And, from the reeking earth where souls in multitudes are hovering yet in stunned bewilderment above the house so suddenly divorced, God broods. Or, taking hand, away from din and stench and cursed perplexity, He lifts them one by one to clearer, stiller air where they may dwell, away from death, away from war, away from earth—and hell.

And yet, some say there *is* no God. When if they looked, or heard, or felt, His presence all about would sensèd be. Here in our homes, sustaining us—else faint we by the way. There, at the front, the warrior's hand is His—or alien hordes had conquered long ago. Prone on the ground, dying, as soldiers die, else anguished pain had overborne the mind of succoring man in those dread days when France and Belgium shed fresh blood, and England, stunned, struck hand on hilt.

Lo, at the grave, standing victorious. Earth cannot conquer God—or God in man.

And so, God is. And, whether war, or pestilence, or dire calamity shall visit us in flesh, we have but to retire unto that inner chamber where God dwells, to be of Him a

part, and He of us. And there to find serenity because of Him—and other worlds of His to follow this, so primitive in human government.

God is. The God of victory. The Conqueror of Death.

IX

THE GREATEST FEAR OF ALL

I HARDLY yet know what happened—or how. Days have gone by which were like no days before. There was an hour of great relief, almost of joy, then—a great Fear—so great that all the nights of apprehension, all the hours of wild panic which had preceded, were like mere symbols of the real. And then a calm like that in my mother's face when she lay on her last couch with a spray of white flowers in her hands.

I have not been able to write, or talk. I wonder whether I have been able even to think. I feel as if I had been away somewhere and had not yet got back.

"DEAR MOTHER" (this was the letter, and at the first word I knew his soul was in stress), "I got your poor, lonely, homesick little note yesterday, and, Mother, it made me feel like deserting." (My heart stood still with dismay. That *such* a letter should es-

cape me!) "You've been such a jolly sport, Mommy, that I didn't know you were so lonely. But, cheer up, Mud; I've some news that 'll make you smile. *I stand a chance of honorable discharge.* I knew it a couple of weeks ago, but I didn't say anything about it. Now don't you worry any more. It's nothing serious, and I'm not sick. Just my old eyes again. I've been going to hospital for some time for treatment, and the surgeon said last week that this might get me a discharge. I told him then I didn't want it, but I guess I do. I'm homesick as a dog and I want to come home and get some simple little job like hauling bricks to the top of a twenty-story building, and earn some money and get a home and put you and Jimsy-Girl in it. I've never said that before, Mom, not even to myself. But it's the honest-to-God truth. My feet aren't cold, and I'd enjoy a whack at Fritz if there was any chance of my ever getting it, but to stick around in some job where I'd maybe wash dishes and scrub greasy pots makes me sick. So don't worry any more, Mom. And you sha'n't be left alone when you are old. In a few weeks the kid 'll be home, and we'll draw a long breath and settle down.

"SON."

That letter came in the afternoon, after a particularly depressing night and day. I read it twice through. That night I went out to dinner and was gay. It was as if some terrible and menacing Shadow which had stood at my shoulder for months had suddenly withdrawn and left me free. It seemed for those first few hours as if there was no world except that little narrow sphere whereon we dwelt—my child and I. And we were safe. I was engulfed and steeped and wrapped in a thousandfold of engrossing egoism. Nothing else mattered. I forgot the war, forgot the faces that had floated, helpless and appealing, on the crest of cruel waves a few weeks before; forgot the mothers whose protesting arms were lifted to heaven; forgot the red earth Over There, and the din and strife. Forgot *everything* except the one great, astounding, joyful fact that my Boy was coming home—safe!

I went to bed and dropped off to sleep as a child would. No wakeful, tossing hours wondering if he were well, if he were cold, if he were safe; no halting, struggling prayer. I have wondered since why I was not prompted to give thanks. My better self must have been entirely absent.

I slept dreamlessly and long.

In the morning I awoke with a great start. It was a gray morning, with snow falling steadily and heavily, the hills obscured. The first sensation was one of terrific apprehension. It was as if all the walls of all the earth were about to close in and fall upon me. I arose hastily and began to dress, mechanically and confusedly. It seemed as if I must make haste to get ready—for something. As my fingers worked and my body became clothed, I began to get control of the disorganized forces. I decided that I had been having a nightmare, although I could remember nothing of it, and that this accounted for the chaotic condition. Then I remembered the letter of the preceding day. Invitingly, I expected the same warm glow of content which had enveloped me the evening before.

It would not come.

Suddenly I was struck chill, to the marrow of me, by a great dismay. . . . *What had I done?*

His letter returned to me, word for word. The abruptness of it impressed me. It was as if, after a struggle, he was throwing up the sponge; as if, after conflict between thought of mother and sense of right, he had succumbed to the former and pushed the

latter out of sight. I sat down in the big wing-chair by the window in my room—the gay, cretonne-covered chair where he and I had read so many books, exchanged so many confidences. Staring into the white storm outside, I saw clearly the mischief my one weak, ill-contrived letter had wrought.

. . . . . .

The day I wrote that letter I had visited an old lady in an Old Ladies' Home. The old woman was utterly alone in the world. She was more than half sick, her mind wandered, her poor old eyes were dim. She was forlorn and wept. She needed proper nourishment and tender hands to administer it, but, not being sick enough to require the services of the overworked and hardened nurse, she was obliged to creep down the two long flights of stairs to her meals, or go without. She had few friends to come in—life is too busy an affair to admit of many calls upon a person merely aged—and she pleaded to be allowed to die.

That sight, on top of my already harassed condition, had depressed and frightened me. I saw myself, childless and alone, reduced to her condition. A bad day followed. That more courageous self which has been

able from the first to make a brave showing, to speak brave words, to uphold and sustain others, seemed suddenly to desert me. The weaker self argued that the only son of a widowed mother would have done his country quite as noble a service in remaining at home to see that she never became an object of charity; that there was plenty of work remaining in civil life for such a youth to play his part, and well; that he had been too young, too immature; that, except for the ranting words of a few over-zealous patriots who themselves had no sons to lose, he might have waited until older. Oh, a fine brood of ignominious progeny came to birth in that dark hour! Physically, as well as morally, I was ill. I had tried to deny the frailty of the flesh, but could not throw it off. And the sick flesh palsied the spirit.

Sick as I was, I clung to office and work, because home is so desolate. With a pounding, aching head, a swollen throat, and tender lungs, I looked out of my window into a deserted street where a blizzard blew and men fought against the storm with averted faces. I thought of warm homes, comfortable couches, the smell of home things cooking, the sound of women's feet going to and fro, preparing comfort for them who were

to come in out of the storm, and my soul stumbled.

"Oh, I *wish* I had a home! . . . A *warm* home, with a wide lounge and cushions on it—before a fire where a woman stays to keep all warm and bright, and a man comes home from work, and children run in from school, and supper cooking on the stove."

And then—I wrote to him. Never once before, since he had been gone, had I allowed one word to escape me so that he might know. And now. . . . I cannot even remember what I wrote, except that I must have told my fear of a great loneliness, and I must have shown to his quick, loving eyes the desolation in which his going had left me.

But, worse than that, *he must have seen that the feather of the quill with which his mother wrote was white!*

. . . . . .

Deep as was the gulf of content into which his letter had first thrown me, overwhelming as was the convulsion of panic with which my returning spirit had been shaken as I came to realize the mischief I had done, the resolution with which I set my hand to undo it was deep and absolutely calm. For *now* I knew at last that *he was not mine.* Knew that I had been tampering with an

instrument of God. A traitor had attempted to destroy one of the delicate pieces of machinery which was being built up for the defense of his own country. Worse than that —a thousandfold worse than that—I had made a dastardly attempt upon *the integrity of a man's soul.* Through his love for me, his chivalry and his pity, he had forgotten the first law. He was ready to lay aside duty and honor because of a mother's weakling cry.

He was too young to sense the full significance of the situation; his mother needed him; she must not be left to face old age and death alone; he could be released "honorably"—and there, for him, now, was the end of it. Doubtless, after long months of hardship and privation and loneliness and homesickness, he would welcome the release gladly. He would fly home on happy wings. But—what of the later years? What of the regret he would feel as his comrades moved on? Of the remorse when he considered his safety bought at the price of their lives? What of his later estimate of his mother?

Already I had tasted the depths of my own suffering. Already I knew that no night of despair or apprehension had been or could be one-half so black as this soul-

sickening dismay before the awful possibility of the present. I could see him march to the forefront of battle with high head and firm lips, but—if he wavered, if he chose the easier road, if he faltered—no old-time hell foretold by fanatical preachers could provide for quivering flesh one-half the anguish that a cowardly soul might come to know, *afterward*, when at last it saw the truth about itself.

. . . . . .

And so I have written him, and I think the ink that I used was of my own heart's blood, and that the pen with which I wrote was a sword. *He must not fail! He must not fail! He must not fail!* These are the words my soul has shouted to him across the gulf of distance. And now, to myself, leashed and gagged, nor plunging with restraint, I cry: *Shame and treason! Hands off through the remainder of this business!*

. . . . . .

I dare not write at night before retiring, either here or to him. I have seen to what depths weakness may lead, and I take no chance. Besides, if I write to him or of him at night I do not sleep. And if I do not sleep I cannot work. And work I must, else I break. And so I take the morning

when courage is at its best and the spirit is strongest. *Why do I not win?* Is every one fighting as I am? Or do others give up their loved ones more quickly, more generously? As for me—I only know that not for a thousand million years of peaceful content with him would I have him leave this thing now until it is finished. I should not be glad to have him discharged, no matter how "honorably." Not until those who went down on the *Lusitania* and all those others who know but salt-sea graves are avenged; not until the world of women and children and peaceful men can be assured against return of such a pestilence; not until Bob and Jack and Dick—yes, and Jacques of France, and English James, and dark-eyed Giuseppe of Italy—not until all of these can throw down their arms and go honorably home to their wives and mothers and sweethearts would I have *him* come home—to me!

No matter what the nights may have in store, or what panic or bereavement the messengers of air or land or water may bring to me, I know one thing for all time: no news could be so bad, so terribly disastrous, so heart-sickening or soul-terrifying, as that he, the child of my blood, were not sticking at his post until the last shot is fired, so long

as he has a leg to stand on, an eye to see with, a hand to guide his sight. There may be weaknesses beyond this hour. Not in a day is one fitted to be a soldier, even of the spirit. We, my soul and I, may face some struggles yet, but already we *know* where victory lies.

. . . . . .

With trembling hands I slid the silver cutter through the envelope of his letter:

"Oh, Mother! If you *hadn't* written just like that. Perhaps I shouldn't have known exactly how I felt, if you had encouraged me, because whatever you said would have been right. The Queen can do no wrong. But when your letter came—your wonderful, beautiful letter that was like banners flying and trumpets shouting and heads up!

"At first, Muddy — honest, I almost dreaded to open it. I didn't exactly know why—I couldn't seem to think very clearly. But when I began to read, when I began to catch your spirit, oh, Mother! I felt like hollering, like throwing up my hat (only soldiers don't throw up their hats). I felt just as if I'd escaped something. And yet, when I wrote that letter and told you I might be discharged, then I thought I was going to escape something, too. Isn't that odd?

"You see, the day your letter came—that other letter, I mean—I'd been on K. P. for three days, and I'd three days more to serve. You know, the fellows in our company have to take turns on K. P. (kitchen police) and we have to clean and pare vegetables, wash dishes, clean up, etc. I'd been scouring pots and pans that day from six in the morning until I felt like deserting. Then I'd think, 'Well, I've got the best mother and the best girl in the world, and if scouring greasy pots is a soldier's job, why, then, a soldier I'll be. But I was so tired, and so sick of the durned job, and I kept thinking how that night we enlisted they told us that we'd all be officers inside of six months, because the fellows who enlisted would, of course, have the best show, and how there'd been *just two non-coms* out of the lot, and I certainly was down. My feet hurt and my eyes were bad.

"Then your letter came, and that same day I had to report at the hospital, and when the doctor said he thought he'd better try to get a discharge for me, I was just plain tickled to death. I hadn't much more than sent my letter off to you, however, when I began to feel uncomfortable, although I kicked the feeling outdoors and

turned over and hugged the thoughts of going home.

"When your *BIG* letter came to-day, though, I knew just where I—the best I—really stood, and, Mother—well, I just can't talk about it. I know now that I've been miserable all the time I thought I was glad, and that if I had gone home I'd have grown miserabler and miserabler to the end of my days. I'd never have wanted to meet one of the fellows, or read a paper, and I'd have grown sour and morose and awful. I can see it plain as a picture. But aren't we queer mixtures, Mother, not to really *know* how we feel, or to admit it, or even to recognize our own selves when they try to stand up before us! We're regular Dr. Jekylls and Mr. Hydes, aren't we?

"And, Muddy, the queerest thing about this is how much more I love you than I ever did before. And I thought I loved my mother about as much as any chap could. And yet—it's just about as if you saw me coming out of the fray safe and sound and had a chance to take me and shield me, and, still, you turned me back into it, not knowing whether I'd ever come out again. And I love you *more* for that. For turning me back, even though it's to danger—and

death. We're queer things, Muddy. *Death* doesn't seem to be so much, after all, *beside some other things.*

"Do you remember, Muddy, when I was a little chap I'd never let you sing, 'Go tell Aunt Nabby her old gray goose is dead,' because it made a lump come in my throat? Boys never want to hear anything that makes them feel sad, and so I could never bear any reference to death. But now—well, we talk about death, and some way, we don't believe in it very much. We know they can do for us—so far as our bodies are concerned —but there's something more. I'm not just sure what, yet, but *something* that a bullet couldn't reach.

"Well, dearest, I guess I'm spieling off anything but a cheerful letter. But, you see, I feel *closer* to you than ever before. I want to talk and talk and talk. Oh, for the big chair by the window, and a fire in the grate, and you and me—and Mac at our feet. And then, supper—and after supper, Jimsy-Girl. *That's my idea of life.*

"Instead—well, ne'm-mind, Muddy. We're *together*, now—absolutely together, dear, pulling together, no matter what miles of earth lie between.

"I could write for hours. There doesn't

seem to be any end to all I could say to you. That's *me*—flowing out to *you*. Oh, Mother, I love you—I long for you! But—*I'm darned glad I'm here!*

"Good night, best and bravest.

"SON."

. . . . . .

Yes, we certainly *are* "queer things—regular Dr. Jekylls and Mr. Hydes." When the spirit was offended he sent me a brief, abrupt note telling me that which he thought would bring relief to my heart, in the few curt words his chagrined soul could muster; when his conscience was at peace his spirit flowed out to mine in quenchless love and confidence. "Know thyself"? Well, maybe—after a million years!

. . . . . .

"BEST-BELOVED,—Your son, as you have so generously recognized, is twenty years of age, according to man's estimate of time. According to his feelings he is at least fifty. If life had gone on as nobody knew it wouldn't when I had my last birthday, I might have been twenty to-day. But—I guess we have all aged ten years in the last six months.

"The box came. Oh, Mother, how *good* you are to me, and it wasn't very nice of a boy to have a birthday so close to Christ-

mas, was it? The apples and oranges and candy—oh, what a treat we had! And the blanket was especially well received. If there's any one thing that goes with this 'Sunny South' climate better than another, it's blankets. I'm so fearfully long, and the cots are so fearfully short and narrow, that if I stretch to my length, my feet stick out 'way above my ankles, and if I draw up, why, then I stick out several ways. I'll just use that blanket to wrap round the particular projection that sticks out at the time—and think of you.

"Jimsy-Girl sent a box, too. A cake that she made—she's some little cook, Mommy—and tobacco and things. Oh, but I'm a rich guy to have two such women-folks! And I bet I just never would have appreciated 'em if I hadn't had this kind of a life. You know I've got an idea. Every man that's got a mother and is going to be married ought to be sent to war for six or eight months, just as you say every girl ought to take a course in home-making. Not *real* war, fighting or sticking bayonets into sawdust, or—or into other things, but just *training* for war. Now, don't misunderstand me. I don't mean that a man ought to take the same training for marriage that he would

for war, but if he *did* take the same training he'd appreciate his home and his family. Only now, we're all scared that just when we've got to where we appreciate these things so we can hardly stand it, Old Fritzy 'll come along and knock the block of appreciation right off'n our heads so we can't try it out to see if we really do.

"It hasn't been half a bad birthday, Muddy, spite of the fact that there wasn't any cake and candles and lovely mother. *Next* birthday, Mommy—when I'm *twenty-one*—say (strange how many brilliant ideas one poor small brain can furnish), next birthday, just to offset this one, we'll have a *party*. A reg'lar party. And you and Jimsy 'll wear party dresses and I'll swagger in with my swallow-tail on and patent leathers. (Oh, you patent leathers! I'd forgotten there were such things.) And we'll have a *white table-cloth*. All over the table. And flowers, and nice dishes, and silver. Silver! oh, ye little gods and tin fishes! I groan—and tumble in.

"Taps.

"A TWENTY-YEAR-OLD LITTLE BOY LOVES HIS MOTHER."

X

A WAR-TIME CHRISTMAS

HIS Christmas box went to-day. Thousands of Christmas boxes are going every day. The trains and offices are clogged with Christmas boxes, and the air is filled with generous impulses. The box I sent was not "mine"—it was "ours." His neighbors, my friends, people who cared but little about him in years past except to consider him a noisy, attractive youngster, have come with freshly wrapped packages to be put in his Christmas box. There were warm gloves from one; fresh, toothsome doughnuts from another; a mysterious, beribboned package from one he had scarcely known; glasses of conserve; boxes of candy; beautiful Oregon apples, separately wrapped; and an army pillow from two little girls whose hair he had doubtless pulled in past days. My own gifts. . . .

I took great pleasure in packing it. There is an exquisite satisfaction in the thought that his hands will touch the papers and strings of my wrapping. God grant that another Christmas may bring the warring men of all nations to their homes.

It is a little strange that the Santa Claus whom we shall so eagerly welcome in a few days must come out of Germany—that ugly, grasping, hating Germany which is like no Germany we ever knew. How dependent we were on the old Germany. And how glad we were to be dependent upon her. How proud we were of her. "She studied in Berlin," we said of our musicians. "He has gone to Berlin," we said of our doctors. "It was made in Germany," we said of our toys and our dishes and so many other things. She was our elder-sister nation; sort, almost, of a grandmother nation—the grandmother who can knit, and spin, and mend toys, and tell stories. We loved her, revered her, admired her, and we were proud and glad to send our children to her to learn her lessons.

And now, what has happened? Why has she thrown down her needle, her mortar and pestle, muffled her music—to grasp the sword and smear it with the blood of the weak? Why has she turned upon us? Why

must we teach our boys and men to *growl* at her and learn the hideous technique of butchery? Why does she hate us and do cruel things to us so that we must turn and rend her? This is a strange and insane Germany that has flung herself, spitting and striking, upon the world. A Germany untrue to her traditions, an upstart Germany that no one can endure . . , that not even she herself can endure, and, so, seeks death by suicide!

. . . . . .

It has been intensely cold—the coldest December in many years. The scarcity of coal strikes fiercely at the hearths of many homes, and those of us who are more fortunate creep into our comforting rooms and think hungrily of those we love who huddle, shivering, beneath inadequate covering in army camps.

. . . . . .

Christmas Eve. A white Christmas. White—*and red.* There is little merriment abroad. The Christmas spirit broods—a drooping, sad-eyed angel.

We shall place the candle in our window this Christmas Eve, even though we remember that the custom came from Germany; but, instead of welcoming the home-coming

of the Christmas guest, its rays will shine through the Red Cross symbol of mercy, and our thoughts will go forth, sorrowfully, to those who lie on beds of pain in a foreign land; to those whose Christmas candle is the camp-fire, those who face a strange, incredible year of sacrifice, hardship, and danger. The ground lies thick with snow. The Lake is bound in ice. The branches of the spruce and pine are weighted heavily. Sleigh-bells jingle as merrily outside my window as ever they did in days when no great tragedy lay dark upon the world.

There is a soft stillness in the air—a pregnant stillness as if the earth, wrapped in unstained garments of virginity, awaited the coming of the Child. A fair and lovely place for His receiving, it would seem indeed. And yet, over the seas, upon the fields, where later, poppies spring—a crimson-footed mass, even the snow from heaven cannot for long remain so pure a robe as this. How can He find a welcome at their doors on this, His natal day—the Prince of Peace? Where hymns of hate are sung and sabers pierce His flesh?

. . . . . .

If, for a moment, we might doubt that even thought of Him whose day we celebrate

should be a stranger on those crimsoned fields, we have but to read of what is taking place there. Here is a clipping from to-day's paper:

PERSHING'S MEN BEGIN CHRISTMAS BUYING

Every Child in Zone to Be Made Happy with Gifts—Huge Christmas Mail Arrives

The purchase of thousands of dollars' worth of Christmas toys and clothing for the children in this section of France was begun to-day by the army. One purchase consisted of three hundred overcoats for the children of refugees. Everything has been bought, from drums to toy rifles and dolls, and all the gifts will be presented on Christmas Day.

One American air squadron will set up a Christmas tree in a hangar for the children of a near-by town. It will be lighted with candles, and there will be a present on it for every boy and girl. Each child will get the gift most desired, the officers having made a list of the names and written beside each what that particular child wanted.

All over the zone it will be a Christmas long to be remembered if the Americans can make it such. Some of the towns will have community trees set up in the public squares, while others will have theirs in the city halls.

The presents for the children are being paid for out of the soldiers' own pockets. One division has raised so far nearly $7,000 for the purpose.

. . . . . .

And these are the men whom they teach to growl in order that they may incite their hearts to kill!

Did Christ, on Calvary's Hill, hang crucified in vain? Is He forgot? Or are these men, who come from many lands to die with Him, living His life, dying His death, and spreading with every drop of blood they shed the message that He left? Peace to the earth and to all men Good Will!

. . . . . .

"DEAR MUDDY,—I can't wish you a 'Merry Christmas' because I know you won't have it. I just wish you a brave Christmas.

"I sent Boy's box to-day and I'm going to tell you what I sent: three pencils, khaki bound Testament, a little book called *A Soldier's Creed*, a note-book, and a diary, both bound in khaki; two silk khaki-colored handkerchiefs, one stick of shaving-soap, one roll of adhesive plaster, bandage, bottle of collodion, two tubes tooth-paste, one cake soap, two washcloths that I knitted, razor blades, four packages of peppermints, two sticks of chewing-gum, one pencil-sharpener, a book of stamps, two boxes of cough-drops, package of quill toothpicks, spool of khaki thread, safety matches, darning-cotton, sew-

ing-kit in khaki, jar of cold-cream, box of aseptic cotton. Then I wrote a little rhyme to go with the regular rations of tobacco which I am having the store people send, *and*—a key to our chest.

"That's a funny conglomeration of stuff, isn't it, Muddy? But I did so long to do something for his comfort. I sent eats on his birthday—all sorts of things—and you did, too, and I thought lots of his friends would send eats for Christmas, so I gathered together these things that I thought might be useful.

"Last Christmas we were at the dance together at the Club and we had *such* a good time and were so happy and free from all thought of coming trouble, and yet, we didn't have each other—not *really*, you know, although I believe we've always *belonged*. And this year we can't be together at all and there's trouble and anxiety, and yet *we've got each other* and we are nearer together than we were last year when we looked into each other's faces and didn't *know*. It's a strange world, isn't it? and it grows stranger all the time.

"I wonder—oh, I wonder where we'll be *next* Christmas. I feel almost afraid when I think of it; and yet, *no matter what*

comes, we are richer for all life than if we hadn't found each other now.

"And you, Muddy—you've got *me* this Christmas, that you didn't have last. I hereby make you a Christmas present of me. Please imagine me all done up in white tissue-paper (a nice big package *that* would be!), tied with holly ribbon and stickers all over me, saying 'Merry Christmas' and 'Please do not open,' and addressed to 'Muddy—Boy's Muddy—and Mine.'

"Your loving

"JIMSY-GIRL.

"P. S.—I forgot to tell you that I finished the socks I knitted for him, and they're enormous. I've filled them with the other things, and they look like the socks of Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum."

Camp ——, *Dec. 26.*

"DEAREST MOTHER, — Thank Heaven, *that's* over. I'm willing to confess now how I dreaded Christmas. Seems to me that I never knew what it was to *think* until now. I didn't know *thinks* could do so much to you—or for you. Part of it, of course, is just plain remembering. The reason I most dreaded Christmas was because I kept thinking about other Christmases and what

fun we always had keeping secrets from each other and opening our packages. That year when I made your magazine-rack was the greatest fun—keeping you locked out of my 'shop' and making such a corking mess. But last year was the best because— Oh, fudge! That's just the way I've been going for a week.

"Anyway, Christmas came—and went—and we got through it fine. I only hope you were kept going as we were so you didn't have much time to think. I keep harping about 'thinking.'

"Boxes. Books. Presents. Mother, it really was a wonderful Christmas. I almost felt like blubbering when I saw how people had thought of me. There was the Red Cross box filled with good things, and *my name on it.* It makes all the difference in the world to have your own name on a thing. Bill Shakespeare was all wrong in that dope of his about a name.

"Then there was a box from the Home Economics Society—the local one at home—also filled with eats and—my name on *that.*

"And Jimsy's box, Mother, do you know what that girl sent? A regular country notion-store. The fellows have already begun to run to me for pins and needle and

thread just as they would to their grandmothers. But wasn't it sweet of her to think of my comfort?

"And your box. I just haven't any words —and I'm pretty strong on words at that. To think that *other* people — folks who thought I was just a nuisance of a boy, teasing their cats and stealing their doormats on Hallowe'en, should send me boxes of cookies and cans of jelly and apples and nuts and gloves. And books. And *your* presents, Muddy. The fountain-pen I am using *first* to write to you with. And the picture of you! I pretty near busted up when I saw that. Gee! Mommy, I'd almost forgotten how good-looking you are! Seems as if I never noticed it much when I was around all the time. But you're a *peach*. My! but you look good to me. And in the little Testament which Jimsy sent there's a place front and back for small pictures, and if you don't mind, Muddy, I'll just cut off your head and wear it next my heart. Maybe it will save me some time—even more than it has already.

"And diaries. Say, Mom, I got six diaries. Now, I've heard of men living *double* lives, but I'll have to lead half a dozen, to do justice to those. However, I'm grateful, even

for diaries by the gross if they come that way—anything that brings a thought from home.

"There were other boxes, too—boxes from 'way out West—boxes of candy, of fruit, and everything good and lovely. It made me feel warm and comforted, and *rich*. I wish to glory I could share with some of our chaps 'Over There' whose boxes didn't reach them.

"Speaking of 'thinking'—I've thought about many another thing than the good times we've always had. I've thought about *you* and about all the trouble I've made you and how headstrong I was, and smart-alecky, and everything, and I'm going to send you a belated Christmas present, and that's—appreciation.

"Oh, Muddy, trying to bring up a wilful, heady boy all alone, without any help or counsel, and earning for two besides! I am beginning to realize all the untiring, hard, hard work you have done to raise a good son, and, Mother—I almost begin to believe that maybe you'll see something come of it, yet. It has looked pretty hopeless at times, but —I see a ray of hope, simply because I begin to see what you're aiming at and I want to help.

"For one thing, let me tell you this. In associating, as I am, with thousands of other fellows, I see that I've got a pretty decently clean mind. Smut and vulgarity are disgusting to me, and, thanks to your wise teaching, I've no childish curiosity to appease. All during my years of maturity you instilled into my mind ideals and principles of honor and decency which will not be destroyed. You have kept my body clean and pure of disease and harm by your wise counsel and your patient teachings, so that I can offer it to the girl whom we know to be as pure as the angels, and know that it will be as clean as hers.

"You speak of your own lack of self-control in some of our moments of heated argument. We are both impulsive, and self-control's the hardest lesson for natures like ours, but you have had bitter experiences to teach you, and I am getting some pretty hard knocks myself. I have to knuckle to the newest, greenest corporal, and to the oldest, ugliest, jigadier brindle, and if I sass back I'd get sent to the guard-house and my pay and my freedom—which is more—taken away. So self-control becomes second nature to a soldier, and he isn't a good soldier until he's learned it.

"When I come home I'm going to look after you all the rest of your days—that's the way I'm going to get back at you. For twenty years you have been giving to me, doing for me. For the next twenty years I am going to pay it back.

"Good Night, Best and Beautifulest Mother a Fellow Ever Had.

"SON.

"P. S.—I can't help, after all, telling you how *desperately* I wanted to come home for Christmas. As the day grew near it seemed as if I couldn't stand it. I almost made up my mind to go, *anyway*, and leave the United States army flat on its back! But—I turned my mind over and made it up again —and here I am."

XI

AND A WAR-TIME WEDDING

"DARLING MOTHER,—Virtue *hath* its own reward. I am to have a furlough. I meant to prepare you for that shock, and—I did. The way the Irishman prepared Mike Flannigan's wife for the news of her husband's death. *I'm coming HOME.* I could shout so it might be heard in Honolulu. I want to dance, to sing, turn handsprings. But I sit and write the joyful news to you, and to her. Mother, have her come home, too. To our house. So I can have you both. And—Mother—brace yourself now—head up. Chest up. Chin in. Atten-*shun!* You know what this furlough means, don't you? It's for eight days, not including travel. It means—that at just about the tail end of that furlough, little sonny and a lot of other fat-heads and dubs and mutts gathered up from the country

round about and all wound round with a piece of khaki cloth, will set sail upon the briny deep and hit out for furrin parts.

"'Attaboy, Muddy! 'At's a way to take it! Never a flicker of an eyelid. 'At's a sojer's Maw. Think o' the sights he'll see and the deeds he'll do and the honors he'll win for his Girl and you. (Gee! Mom, I didn't know that was going to rhyme that way till it was down. I didn't know I was a poet, did you?)

"And, Mother—I'm dead serious now—Jimsy and I want to be married before I go. Yes, I know I'm only twenty—now. But I'll be twenty-one next, and I'm older now at twenty than, under ordinary conditions, I would have been at twenty-five. And—yes, I know I may come back minus an arm or a leg or an eye, and Jimsy may have to be the man of the family. But, Mother, seems to me I'm honoring her in letting her look at this just as I would. If *she* were going to face any such danger I should want, more than anything in the world, to make sure of the right to care for her. She feels the same way—she considers it her *right.* Besides—the chances are on our side. . . . I'm good at dodging, you *know* I am, Mommy.

"And she's given you her argument. I know about that. Don't hold off, Muddy. This is our chance—maybe our only one. Give us your blessing and your love. I have written to her people. I don't know what they'll say, but she seems to think they will not oppose us. I can't imagine any one denying her anything. Can you?

"This is Monday—I leave Wednesday. I shall see you Saturday. Mother—before the end of a week *I shall see you.* I had almost felt as if I should never see you again. One week? One—eternity.

"SON.

"P. S.—Please have beefsteak and onions, and plenty of butter and bread, and *coffee—real* coffee with sugar in it, and cream.

"And tell Mac I'm coming. And have them sweep off the Lake so Jimsy-Girl and I can skate on it, and get the band out, and have the stores all shut up and people all line up on the street so I can see them all at once and shake hands with them. And get the fire department out to hold me down or I shall go right up and out like a rocket.

"One week. *Home.*"

. . . . . .

God knows I had no desire to "hold off." This was their hour—perhaps their last.

Let them have it and Heaven's blessing—if Heaven *has* any blessings at this present time—upon them.

And so she came—the day before he did—a wide-eyed, wild-rose little girl, creeping close into my arms, laying her head upon my breast—warm and sweet and lovely, happy beyond words at the thought of seeing him, but with the agony of parting shadowing her eyes.

And then *he* came. The beefsteak was ready for him, and the coffee and sugar and cream, warm bread—with plenty of butter. He came, and immediately from attic to cellar the old house was filled to overflowing. No empty, echoing halls here. No silent, reproachful piano. No dim and haunting shadows. He whistled, he called, he played, he sang, he caught Jimsy in one arm and me in the other and danced, while Mac, frenzied with the same joy, whirled and yelped and leaped about us. He did all the old tricks he had ever done, and improvised new ones. He rushed out to greet old friends and fell upon the necks of his neighbors. He fed the dog and teased the cat and hugged his mother. Then for a few moments he took his sweetheart into the dusky warmth of the flower-scented, book-

lined, fire-lighted library and worshiped sweetly. Later I was called and we made our few simple arrangements for the wedding, the brief, simple, sorrowful war-time wedding that was to take place next day.

That it should take place at once we were all agreed, in order that they might have every moment for their all-too-short wedded life.

The church still wore its Christmas garlands of green—the beautiful little old, old church standing far back from the village street among the old, old pines whose long branches swept the sunken graves and tipsy, lichened stones of a hundred years and more ago. The graves this day were all blanketed with a thick mantle of snow, and the branches of the pines bent heavily beneath their burden.

From within, as we slipped softly into the warm, sweet, lighted dusk of the church, there came the soft, low tones of the organ. No wedding-march this time, but the throbbing, vibrant tones of "America." No flowers upon the altar, no bridal bouquet in the girlish hands. Ground-pine and branches of evergreen crept over the altar, the Stars and Stripes bent over their bowed heads as if in consecration, and in her hands Jimsy-

Girl—dressed in a gray gown—the gray of the ship that would take him away from her—carried a little cluster of silken flags. Over the white robes of the preacher there suddenly came through the chancel window a golden ray of light, bringing the blue of Mary's garments and the crimson of Joseph's coat to the bowed heads before him. Was it an omen, and was there prophecy or promise in the sign? Our hearts bled for the sweet white faces of this youthful wedded pair as they turned their eyes to their new day, awaiting them outside.

. . . . . .

Six days of joy—of poignant, throbbing joy—deepened and colored with the inevitable parting before them. Then—a rending, a great blurring of sight and thought, out of which came cheerful voices that no one recognized, smiles that were like the grinning of death masks, the shriek of a train rushing headlong away toward God knows what, and then darkness. When the light came back to us we were together—his wife, and I.

XII

"THEY THAT GO DOWN TO THE SEA"

ONE had almost become accustomed to the little yellow envelopes—before the war. It had become the custom for husbands to send their wives birthday and anniversary messages by wire; greetings of all manner and sort came by way of the "night letter"; lovers sent frequent reminders of their constancy—until we had all but lost our old-time dread of the blue-clad messenger.

Now, however, we start at the sudden ringing of a bell, and our fingers tremble as they close upon the scrap of paper.

With the receipt of the telegram from Boy, which merely said, "Bring Jimsy and come to the Hostess House at Camp —— at once," I knew that a gray boat was about to sail and that my heart—and hers—would be among its cargo.

Jimsy and I packed our bags silently, added a few last little gifts for him, and went.

All the fine, brave arguments with which, all these months, I had braced and sustained myself broke and fled as the miles roared under the wheels of the train, and left me a poor, weak, frightened woman, coming hourly nearer to the supreme test of her life. How could I get the strength to face that parting? Until now my beloved had been on the same soil with me. However far he seemed, I could still think of him as somewhere within reach. There were trains and mails and telegraphs. Two or three days of travel could bring him to me, or me to him. But now. . . . It seemed as if this I could not bear. And yet—I must. And I must not quail or whimper when I came face to face with him. Heels together now! Head up! What *is* a soldier's mother?

And she? Crumpled, she seemed, like a rose leaf, so sweet and pale, but dry-eyed and with lips tightly set. Under the cruel burden of this thing—come so untimely into her young life—how could she find courage to bear what was before her? What right had fate—or man—to roll upon this fair

young girl the weight of so dread a burden —before she had begun to live?

. . . . . .

The distraction of finding our way at the end of the journey was a blessed relief; it took us out of ourselves, and by the time we reached the little town outside of which the great Embarkation Camp stretches its enormous area we had ourselves pretty well in hand.

We were directed to a little house and made at home for the night. The streets were deeply snow-clad, like those at home, and the shadows from the street lamps lay heavily upon them. Through the streets a great traffic was passing, of soldiers coming and going, and of men and women, evidently strangers, from other parts of the country. The eyes of some of the women were red with weeping, and the faces of some of the men were stern with self-control. We knew that their errand to that place was the same as ours.

In the evening we talked a little with some of them; mostly we talked of trivial things, and that helped. But underneath the casual conversation there was just one thing, and it was not trivial. With brave voices and faces carefully composed we talked, but in

the eyes that seldom know how to lie, even though the lips succeed, we all saw the same Shadow. . . .

. . . . . .

The Last Camp—Somewhere in America—is not far from the sea, from "an Atlantic port," whence the ships carry precious cargoes to the battle-line. You do not see much about that place in the newspapers. The regiments of the new army go there from the training-camps, stay just a few days for the final preparations, and then, at times known only to those who operate the great War Machine, and to the relatively few parents and wives and sweethearts who can make the trip for a last look at loved faces, the long trains take them down to the docks and the steamers. . . .

The next morning we found our way to the camp. Just within its gates is the "Hostess House," a place blessed in the eyes of God and in the hearts of men and women; though it did not seem so to us *then*—for us it was a kind of Gethsemane!

At the "Hostess House" the women of that countryside gather in relays to greet and help the mothers and fathers, wives and sweethearts, sisters and brothers, who come to say their last farewell to the boys who,

like our Boy, are leaving for Over There. We entered, and to a soldier detailed to help us gave Boy's name and the necessary items to identify his regiment and company. While he was busy with the telephone we had time to watch what was going on around us.

I promised myself that hour that never again would I judge a woman by her dress or the expression of her face. For as I sat there one came in. I knew by her gown that she was rich, and there was about her an aroma of luxury. Her face was hard and seemingly cold, with that impersonalness that grows upon the faces of women long sheltered behind the walls of wealth. I could not imagine what she was doing there. There was no line or feature suggesting that she came to say farewell to any loved one. Curiosity, I guessed; she would be finding some new sensation in watching in others the sufferings she could not feel.

Scarcely had I framed my judgment before I saw that woman with her arms about a little girl. And into that marble face had come a light of sympathy that transfigured her. With such hands as Sisters of Mercy spread over the brows of suffering and sorrow she comforted that child; took infinite

pains to find the brother whom the child had come to see, and left them together.

. . . . . .

There was even a wedding while we waited. A pale and frightened girl and a dark-skinned soldier—evidently of foreign race—stood up before a chaplain in uniform who made them man and wife. A man and woman, evidently her parents, stood with them, glowering and in what seemed to me a menacing attitude. I thought they feared that somehow the man might escape and leave the ceremony unfinished. Not a flicker in their faces of any light of love or pride; never a gentle word for the daughter in what should have been a blessed hour in her life. It was rather dreadful. But all through the ceremony the hard-faced rich woman of my hasty condemnation stood beside the pitiful little bride and sought to mother her. . . .

There were other things that we saw at the "Hostess House," then and afterward; tender ministrations such as mark and certify the unity of womanhood in common helpfulness the world over.

. . . . . .

And then came Boy! He stood a moment in the doorway—so tall and strong and alert; bronzed and utterly manly. A sudden pang

struck through me as I saw that my child was gone forever; but the pang died out in a surge of pride as I took in the Man who had come instead. Through the deep tan of his face glowed a flush of joy and eagerness; as he stood there I sensed in his hesitation a moment's doubt—*which of us first?* Then he leaped forward and swept us both into his arms.

It was our women's privilege to weep. He must not weep; but his eyes were swimming, and around his young lips were lines of a pain he could not hide.

We sat down there for a little while, and then went out together, and walked through the snow-drifted streets. Every few steps we passed soldiers, soldiers, soldiers. Many were officers, and as each of these passed by we took a certain pride in the way *our* soldier stiffened and with minutely scrupulous precision snapped his salute and received the due acknowledgment. Many of the soldiers we passed that day were walking, too, with their dear ones, having, I knew, the same kind of conversation as ourselves.

And *such* conversation it was! We had come three hundred miles for it; yet almost every word we said might have been shouted from the housetops or sent through the pub-

lic mails on postal cards! Why is it that men and women in the crucial moments of their lives, with every instant precious, can bring to their lips only commonplaces? He explained to us a thousand military technicalities; told us endless tales of camp life, events of the long journey north; personalities about men we never heard of and never in all our lives would meet. He asked about trivial things back home; about Mac and the old plumbing in the house; about the neighbors; about skating on the Lake, and how long we thought the sleighing would last this winter. And we were glad of every word of it—greedily drank in every syllable, and treasured it like utterances of inestimable wisdom.

At last I screwed up courage to ask the question whose answer must be a blow:

"When . . . ?"

"I'm not sure. They do not tell us anything. But it must be very soon. The commissary fellows are packing up the kitchen stuff, and they are loading the baggage-cars. It's not hard to guess. I've got a hunch that it 'll be . . . to-night."

"To-night? Oh . . . !"

Then back to the dear banalities again. But the winter sunshine had gone black be-

fore my eyes and the rising wind cut through me like a knife. Like a sword.

. . . . . .

We passed a little shop. I saw in the window women's things — laces and ribboned fripperies. Who in the world could care for such stuff—*now?* But I said, with "business of cheerfulness" as real as I could muster:

"I've got to go in here for a little while. You children walk on a bit, and come back here when you get ready. I have quite a lot of things to get, and it will take me some time."

I rushed into the place. As I opened the door a bell jangled over my head.

I don't know what I bought. I never have opened the parcel. The woman must have thought I was crazy — unless other mothers perchance have gone into that little shop to buy things without seeing them, while outside the Boy who is all the world to them walked for the last time with *Her.* Anyway, I know that I was in that place for years and years.

. . . . . .

Physically impossible I find it to write in any detail of that day. He took us through such parts of the camp as were open for

visitors; showed us the wonderful equipment of the Y. M. C. A. and the Knights of Columbus, the big assembly-hall—all the things that have been prepared with so lavish a hand to protect and entertain these boys. It is all a huddle in my memory. Least of all could I set down any of the things we said.

We were more than ordinarily privileged; for the Commanding Officer had given Boy not only a generous leave to be with us, but a pass that allowed him to be outside the limits of the post.

"Not many fellows get that," said Boy.

We tried to be happy in the terribly brief respite given us; but it was a sorry business. We simply could not talk of the thing that was in the minds of all of us, and those that we did talk of seemed so futile! Yet we clung to the poor remnants of the old life that was gone never to return, and tried to make the most as best we could of the time that was left in which to look into those dear eyes, to feel the grip of those strong, loving hands, and to hear that resonant voice, deep now with a new note of established manhood and self-reliance.

We went back to the "Hostess House"—it was too cold to stay outside. I tried to

give Them all I could of time to be together; made little foolish trips to look out of the window; invented absurd errands out of doors where the northwest wind was now a gale, whirling the snow in clouds along the road. Jimsy-Girl did her share, too, of bustling out of the room and leaving me alone with him — alone in that crowded place of tearful partings, where other parents clung to the last second of the last minute to Boys of their own; where wives with streaming eyes or white, tearless faces bade farewell. . . .

. . . . . .

In the gray of a dawn, after such a night as I know now the mothers and wives of condemned men pass, we awakened from a brief and troubled sleep, and each of us lay there wide-eyed, with aching hearts, sharing, though we dared not speak of it, the certainty that, out on a gray sea, a gray ship was plowing through the tumbling waves, eastward, ever eastward, away from these shores toward the waiting Menace, and laden with all that was left of life for us.

All night a bitter roaring wind out of the northwest had shaken the house and rattled the windows, and the bare branches of the trees outside had crashed with a sound like

that of armed conflict. The house was not far from the railroad, and all night, over the shrieking of the wind, we heard frequently the whistle of passing trains. The engines on that road scream shrilly, like none I ever heard before. Each train that went by screamed—there is no other word for it—like a human soul in an agony of fear. And each train, I thought, must be the one that was taking him away. Afterward, Jimsy-Girl told me she thought so, too. At the time we did not speak of it.

I knew she was awake, and she knew the same of me; but it was not until the first rays of the rising sun glinted at the edge of the window-shade that she slipped her hand over and took hold of mine.

"We must be very brave, Muddy, for his sake. But it's hard. Oh, it's *hard!* To be left behind, alone. If only we . . ."

"Yes, dear. But there are two of us, and only one of him. And he will be brave Over There; so it's up to us to be brave over here."

. . . . . .

We had a few hours to wait before we could start for home. The wind died down soon after sunrise, and after a choking attempt at breakfast we walked up and down

the street. It seemed strangely empty; reminded me of the streets at home after the summer visitors have gone. There were still a few soldiers about; but that rushing traffic of the day before had largely vanished. A kind of hush had settled down, as if there were a lull between momentous happenings.

Just then a long train of sleeping-cars pulled into the station, and presently from every car soldiers poured out—hundreds of them—and formed in line in the square in front. They looked weary and travel-stained.

"Where are you from?" a bystander asked one of them.

"From Texas," the lad replied; then hurried to his place in the line. Back in the car some of them were singing, "Where Do We Go from Here, Boys?"

"These troops have come to take the places in camp of the ones that went out last night," I heard some one say.

With dragging steps we went into the railroad station. As well wait there as anywhere. And past the window in what seemed an endless procession the brown figures marched, with shuffling, monotonous tread. The last man passed. Desolate indeed, we sat down in silence, side by side,

but each alone in a solitude of misery. Upon our lives settled down a weight that it seemed not even the comforting hand of God might ever lift or lighten. My weary soul could find no help in any thought of bravery or duty or self-sacrifice. I looked at Jimsy-Girl and knew that the same ashen pallor that blanched her face lay also upon my own.

. . . . . .

An old, old man came in and trudged wearily up to the ticket-agent's window. He leaned upon the shelf in front of the window, and I sensed the fact that he was crushed under some burden that deprived him of capacity to speak or think. He took a wallet out of his pocket, fussed with it with fingers that he could not guide, and dropped it on the floor.

"I'm going to help that old man," I said, and, stepping quickly to his side, recovered the wallet. He seemed unable even to thank me, but took the thing from me and fumbled in it once more; again it fell from his trembling hand.

"I'm afraid you are ill. Come over here and sit down by us." I guided him over to our bench. "What can I do for you? Did you want to buy a ticket?"

"I don't know," he said at last, feebly. "I am not ill. I'm all right, I guess. But —they say my boy is gone. Gone. . . . I wasn't in time. He telegraphed. I came as soon as I could. But Mother was sick. . . . At last she made me come alone. . . . And now they say he's gone. He couldn't wait for me."

It was good for him to unburden his heart; his voice, at first weak with weariness and despair, grew stronger as he talked, and presently he was telling us the heartbreaking story—of his long journey from Michigan, alone, to see his youngest boy once more before he sailed. And all in vain.

"He's such a *little* fellow!" he protested. "Born when I was fifty. Always the baby of the family. . . . And I got here too late to say good-by. How can I tell it to Mother? She's pretty sick, and nothing less could have got me away from her. They hunted all over the place for him, and then told me that he left last night. . . . I came as fast as I could. I didn't even sleep. I was traveling all night. And got here too late. I'm afraid it will kill her. He was just her baby. She never could understand how he could be big enough! But he was a good boy. And brave. He'll make a good sol-

dier. How can I tell him that I tried to get here?"

And then we found that somehow he had lost part of his money and hadn't enough to buy his ticket back home!

Here was work to do. We took him back to the "Hostess House," and by the time our train left had seen him in good hands.

"This is just what we are here for," the Red Cross major said. "Let your mind be at peace about him. We will send the old man home in proper shape, and the Red Cross in his own town, to which we shall telegraph at once, will look after him and 'Mother.' Further, we shall have our people on the other side get in touch with the 'little fellow' and see that he knows that his old father came down here to see him off, and that he was rightly taken care of."

. . . . . .

"I guess that's a lesson for us, Mother," said Jimsy-Girl, after we had settled into our seats in the train. "Thank God we were in time to see *our* Boy, and we had a blessed day with him, didn't we? Do you know, I was so swamped in my own troubles that I just forgot all about the other people—lots of them so much worse off than we are. I never shall forget that old man's face as

long as I live. So white and tired and crushed he looked. Just think—all the way from Michigan and an old sick wife—and then to find his 'little fellow' gone!"

"My dear," I said—I was thoroughly myself now—"we are going to be too busy to think of our own sorrow. Our Boy, Over There, is going to be too brave and too busy to think about himself. Over here we must be too busy and too brave to think about ourselves. There are so many people who will be sad and poor and bewildered. . . . We have just got to buckle down and help them. We've got to work not only for Boy and the rest in the trenches, but for the lonely and sorrowing and suffering over here. We shall be too much occupied to think about ourselves at all. And—"

"Muddy," she interrupted, warmly, "I'm all on fire to *do*. I want to be marching *with* him. All the way. If I could only have foreseen, I should have been a nurse and I should have gone with him. But not all of us can be nurses and not all of us can go. There's heaps to be done here. And we'll be fighting, too, won't we, Mother? Fighting—with him."

She drew close to me and slipped her hand into mine.

And so, worn and wan though we were with our grief, fearful though our aching hearts were for that brown-clad form now merged in the gray mists of the sea, there came to us a new and great light, a mighty and holy courage to face the coming days. Fighting we should be—*for* him, and *with* him. Fighting with our purses to help sustain him in comfort and to put into his hands weapons of defense; fighting with our hands in conservation of food that he may have more; in preparation of all such things as may go to allay his sufferings; in ministering to those he leaves behind—this Boy in Khaki, the son of Columbia. Fighting with our hearts, a stout and cheery fight, never quailing, never flinching, never doubting that he will win. Marching, step to his step, shoulder to his shoulder, smile to his smile, song to his song. Thus only can we be the women worthy of Them.

XIII

LOOSE HIM AND LET HIM GO

I WRITE at a long, wide table. Upon it are three new atlases propped open. Behind it upon the wall are larger maps, with pins to mark the changing battle-lines. The postman will bring me government bulletins, war-books, magazines describing every aspect of the struggle. The newsboy will bring me daily papers detailing every movement. From these I shall follow, as closely as I may, the footsteps of my beloved.

In the home at my right a mother goes steadily about her daily tasks, faltering not, but her lips tighten and the shadow deepens in her eyes as the hour for the daily papers, with its ever-increasing casualty-list, draws near. In the home at my left a little woman measures the hours of the day with the cares of her home, her work at the Red Cross, her specified time at the surgical-dressing rooms, and at night she tucks two little boys into

their beds and tells them stories from the letters which their Soldier Daddy sends home from across the sea. And she does not mourn, she does not rail, she does not flinch. But the laughter is gone from her eyes, and the line of her lips that used to be so merry is straight and firm.

Across the way from me is the widowed mother of three sons—and two are on their way. Her ruddy cheeks have paled in the last few months, but a lift to her head and a steady light in her eyes bespeak a gallant soul, anguish-ridden though it be.

In the same building where I work is the father whose son has been three years at the front in France; wounded severely at Vimy Ridge. Together he and the boy's mother await the days—whatever they may bring, not weakly fearing, not harassing their neighbors with lamentation or words of nervous apprehension, but with a calm courage born of a righteous fulfilment of the law, "Greater love hath no man—"

. . . . . .

Out upon the ocean this lowering wintry day the gray ships steal along; thousands of watchful eyes strain at the surface of the deep to protect their precious freight. No bands play; no voices shout or sing. A

hushed and brooding stillness enfolds them as they plow their way through grim gray waves. Upon their decks they carry a weight by which, if love and anxious, tender thought were such as could be weighed, each would be sunk a million fathoms deep. *Our boys are on their way!*

Beyond the gray horizon we may not look. Days will go by and we shall do our work, meet the same neighbors on the street, look into their eyes, and greet them with a smile. The same details of the morning's rising and the same round of daily cares. At night, mercifully tired and with brain fatigued, the welcome dark to cloak the eyes released, the unchained lips. Hours of fearful expectancy when we dread the black headlines of our papers, breath of relief when the day goes by with no tidings of disaster. A million prayers winging their way to God for safe guidance over the seas and protection on the land—Over There. Given a fighting chance, we may hope, even if we may no longer pray. For *special* dispensation we will not ask. But that the foe may yield, that the neck of Autocracy be quickly broken, that the Mad Beast be early caged, surely an anguished nation's mighty strength of righteous prayer may justly hurl its weight against the opposing hymn of hate.

Loosed from the individual tie, my son, the child I bore and nursed and loved and led, no longer is—at present—mine. Into my heart I have gathered *all* the boys of *all* the mothers of the world; I have loved them and bent over them and touched their heads and commended them to God and to His care; I have sent them out together—mine as one of many, no more *mine* than they—and I follow them with tender, anxious thought. But *I do not grieve for mine alone.* I try not to hold him by the faintest selfish thought. He belongs to that which infinitely is greater than a mother's heart, and he fares forth bravely to a fight that is not fought for his hearth alone, but for the homes of English James and French Jacques and those under the blue Italian skies. Aye, and that the homes and hearths of Germany may be freed also!

I do not even, as I have so often done in the early months, bridge over the present with a human thought for the end of this and his safe return. Once, in order to lure the boon of sleep, I had to fill my mind with dreams of home and of him returning there; assure myself that months—or weeks, perhaps, would see him back, safe, sound, and well. Surely a gracious Providence, remem-

bering in His mercy such a lonely state as mine, and previous woes, and griefs such as not many have to bear, would shield a back, already bent, from further burden.

But now, I face the future with a calm which, while it may not be an offspring of pure courage born, is still a child of surety. I know that, though the body which has clothed the being I love may prove frail hindrance to an armed foe, that though the flesh my love has wrought and tended to its perfect state may never feel the ministration of my hands again; that even though my mortal eye may never rest on mortal face of his—*see him I shall.*

I know that shot nor shell nor barbed sword nor all the cruel devices of a Beelzebub can touch the One who dwells within the riddled house. I know that if they put his body 'neath a foreign soil, his soul will wing its way across the sea to me. I know that, even though he fall upon the battlefield, God hath not ordained that Life and Love of His shall be blotted out.

Love, strengthened a thousandfold by anguished partings, and by danger, death, and fear, is proof against any earthly sword. Beyond the gray horizon now we may not see, but, come what will, we wait serene.

XIV

"IT WAS HIGH TIME"

"Somewhere in France."

"DEAREST MOTHER,—Oh, the budget of letters that met me here! I suppose you beat me to it because we were a good deal longer on the way than some of the ships that carry mail. We had some pretty fierce experiences, but I can't write about them now. *Some* story, believe me! But I don't want to write anything that will tempt the censor to put the kibosh on my letters. So here I am writing with a heart full, in one of the bully places that the American folks keep going wherever there are troops, to keep us happy and comfortable. It's wonderful to see and feel so many things that the folks back home are doing for us. Makes the distance seem shorter, I can tell you. And we need that, for sometimes we get pretty lonesome.

"It's good to think of you both back home again, even if it is so long since that last day. Gee! that was tough! Muddy, I had a pretty hard time keeping a stiff upper lip that day. You were both bricks—just bricks! I knew it must be hard for you—a lot harder, maybe, than it was for me, and that's saying a great deal. . . .

"My dearest, dearest Mother, I wish I could make you understand how much I realize—as much as any boy can realize—what it means to you to have me go away like this, so far out of reach, and moving toward the dangers that get nearer every day. But don't you ever forget that you have prepared me, all these years, to meet in the right way the dangers that would make me less of a man, less clean and square and honest! And I'm not worrying about the dangers of the battle-field. Lots of fellows come through those dangers all right, and we've got to face them without fear. After all, we all have to die some time, and I guess the thing that matters is how you face it and what you are doing when it comes. I kind of know what it must mean to you, and when I think of that it almost gets my goat. But when I get down to brass tacks I can tell you that your courage that day,

and hers, helped me to buck up, and stays with me now, and will stay with me, more than you can guess. If *all* the folks back home keep *their* nerve, we can keep *ours*. And it's *nerve*, back home and at the front, that's going to win this war. . . .

. . . . . .

"The things we are going through every day make a fellow pretty solemn, I can tell you. You'd be surprised if you could see how some of the wildest and most reckless of the boys have toned down; the serious kinds of talk that we have among ourselves. It's a fine thing to me to see so much that is good coming out in the fellows that you wouldn't have thought it of.

"It isn't altogether the danger, and I don't think the fear of death has so very much to do with it, either. I suppose it's natural for every man to think that death is coming to *somebody else*, and that he's going to get through all right, just as he always has in the other kinds of trouble that have come to him. But there's a sort of seriousness that you see in the eyes of men; some of them don't talk much, but somehow you know it's there.

. . . . . .

"How's Mac, Mother? Does he ever ask

where I am any more? Give him my love, and tell him to be a good boy. . . .

"We don't hear much about what is going on at the real front. We're a good distance back from it yet, and all sorts of rumors, good news and—some not so good—drift back, but we never can tell what's true and what isn't. But we keep our chins up, and go where we're sent and do what we're told to do, each content to play to the limit the part that's given him to play. The principal thing a soldier has to learn is to believe that whatever he is elected to do is the most important thing in the whole war, as far as he's concerned, and that if he does his best in that place and that job, all the rest will be done just as well, and the Big Thing, whatever it is, will be put over. That's the way all of you back home must feel; that you're just as important, working and giving and loving and enduring, 'way back there beyond the ocean, as we are here at the front. It helps us a lot to know that you are doing it. But don't work so hard that you forget, or don't have time, to write to us!

. . . . . .

"When I see what's to be seen here in France, I keep thinking how little are the sacrifices we Americans have made. How

little we realize what this war has meant. I don't mean the maimed and crippled men, though there are lots of those. I am thinking, for instance, of a woman I talked with in my broken French to-day in one of the villages we passed through. A fine, brave French mother. Somehow she reminded me of you, Muddy. When the war broke out she had her husband and four sons, and a daughter about seventeen. The husband and three of the sons are gone, and the fourth son is back again, crippled for life. I saw him. He'll never be much use to her, except as some one left to love. I guess you'll say that's a good deal! And so it is.

"And the daughter? Well, all there was of her was a photograph of an awfully pretty French girl. Nobody knows where she is. They don't like to think much about where she is or what has happened to her. When the war broke out she was visiting some relatives up near the Belgian line—Maubeuge, I think they said. The gray wave of Germans swept over that place, and they never have heard a word about her. Three years!

"It made me wish I could somehow break through that wall of German guns and bayonets—the way I felt, I thought I could almost go through with my bare hands—

and find her and rescue her and bring her back to her mother and her crippled brother. I tried to say something like that to this poor woman. She just shook her head. I never knew before the meaning of the word Despair. It was in her face. I think that mother has forgotten how to shed tears. Perhaps all the Frenchwomen have. But most of the time she was smiling—on the outside, anyway.

"And the welcome she and all her neighbors and all the people in all the little towns have given us! I can tell you that it's worth while to be here if only to see the light in the eyes of the French as they look at the Stars and Stripes at the head of the column.

"Three years! They have given all they had. *It was high time for us to come.*"

XV

OURS MUST BE THE SPIRIT

TO the right and to the left, before, behind, and up and down the land from sea to sea, we stand, an army of mothers, fathers, sisters, sweethearts, and wives. And across that menacing floor of blue which lies between us and the riven land of battles another army stands; English lady and French peasant, Italian countess and Irish maid, arm in arm and shoulder to shoulder. A brave and gallant army with hand on hilt of sword, no matter whether that sword be typified by wheel of factory or kitchen spoon.

Women behind and men at the front. That is the line of action. Long lines of stern, determined men, marching, marching, marching across the trampled fields of France to where the very soil groans and heaves and belches forth its ghastly secrets beneath a shocked and saddened Heaven. Behind them

long lines of brave, unflinching women marching, marching, marching—to whatever duty may befall their hands; nor thought of rank or station, ease, or fine accustomedness.

Guns booming and shells bursting along the fighting-line; men sweating, men dropping, men bleeding, men dying. And behind them, close behind them, rank upon rank and file upon file, are women; women feeding, women nursing, women clothing, women cheering.

For us, and because of us, and through us they are there. And, as we stand, as we succor, as we cheer and comfort and God-speed them—so they win—or fail. Theirs must be the fight, but ours must be the spirit with which they gain the victory.

THE END